

# Pembroke Center Inaugural Seed Grant Recipients January 2013



## **Dialogues in Feminism and Technology: A Distributed Online Collaborative Course 2013**

Working with a network of feminist scholars, artists, and teachers around the world, this project will initiate a “cyber learning experiment” that creates a distributed online collaborative course (DOCC) on the topic of “Dialogues in Feminism and Technology.” This DOCC will engage experts in Science and Technology Studies, media artists, online learning instructors, and media systems designers and involve instructor and student participants at fifteen universities and colleges in the U.S. and abroad. Project leaders aim to demonstrate a work of collaborative feminist technological innovation for the purposes of addressing the educational needs of students interested in advanced topics in feminist Science and Technology Studies. The DOCC will add to the digital archive of material on the history of women and technology and illuminate the contribution of feminist Science and Technology Studies scholarship to the histories of science and technology. Project leaders also aim to engender a set of digital practices among women and girls, to teach and encourage their participation in writing the techno-cultural histories of the future by becoming active participants in the creation of global digital archives.

The project will make available a shared set of learning materials such as an online space for social exchange, and a set of prompts for collective and collaborative learning activities. The project will also invite experts to participate in a set of moderated dialogues that will be videotaped and shared online. The funding from the Pembroke Center seed grant will make possible several of these video dialogues.

- **Wendy Hui Kyong Chun**, Professor of Modern Culture and Media, Brown University
- **Alexandra Juhasz**, Professor of Media Studies, Pitzer College
- **Anne Balsamo**, Dean of the School of Media Studies, New School for Public Engagement
- **Tara Nummedal**, Associate Professor of History, Brown University
- **Kelly Dobson**, Associate Professor of Digital + Media, Rhode Island School of Design



## **Does it Help or Hurt Women to Marry “within” the Family? Consanguineous (Cousin) Marriage and Genetic Risk in Egypt**

The Middle East remains one of the areas of the world where first cousin marriage is pervasive. Many theories attempt to explain the social benefits that might outweigh the genetic deterrents for particular communities, such as the maintenance of property and wealth within the family, or the reduced cost of out-marriage arrangements. Yet these benefits may have lower appeal as tribal affiliation and land-based family economies erode in the face of global capitalism,

urbanization, the nuclearization of families, wage labor, the hegemony of medicalized “risk” discourse, the participation of women in the economy, and the decrease in fertility rates.

The “common wisdom” in Western societies is that first-cousin marriage should be avoided because of the genetic risk posed to offspring. Yet in the U.S., state bans on first-cousin marriage, begun in the late 19th century, were aimed against immigrants and the rural poor and pre-date modern genetic discourses of risk (Ottenheimer 1996, Kuper 2002). Many geneticists have argued that the increased risk of inheriting recessive and dominant autosomal disorders with first-cousin marriage is clear, but also modest, and no larger than the increased risk associated with advanced maternal age (Modell and Darr 2002).

This project will explore the willingness of people in Egypt to marry first or second cousins despite the knowledge about increased risk to offspring, and public health messages and medical authorities’ attempts to actively discourage such marriages. Egypt represents an important site for such research because consanguineous marriage is neither blatantly stigmatized and medicalized as it is among South Asian immigrants in the UK, nor is it fully normalized as in the Arab Gulf. Field research and data collection will take place in collaboration with geneticists at the National Research Centre in Egypt, which receives patients referred from all over the country who seek diagnoses and information regarding inherited diseases, often in their children. The major research aim is to understand how women and men across classes and generations understand the benefits and risks of cousin marriage. The project will culminate with two campus-wide collaborative meetings to explore the research findings.

- **Sherine Hamdy**, Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Kutayba Alghanim Professor of Social Science, Brown University
- **Tanya Dailey**, Clinical Assistant Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Brown University
- **Beshara Doumani**, Joukowsky Family Distinguished Professor of Modern Middle East History, Brown University
- **Stephen Bush**, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, Brown University
- **Samia Temtamy**, Professor of Human Genetics, Egypt’s National Research Centre
- **Samira Ismail**, Clinical Geneticist, Genetics, Egypt’s National Research Centre



## **Performing Native *América*: Indigenous Public Culture in Transnational Perspective**

Against a backdrop of increased activism and cultural revitalization among indigenous peoples in the Americas, this project will bring together scholars to explore how emergent forms of cultural performance reveal new patterns in indigenous mobilization and alliances across borders. It will facilitate dialogue among scholars whose work focuses on distinct peoples and regions throughout the Americas, north and south of the Rio Grande. This geographic barrier is rarely traversed in existing scholarly work on indigenous sociocultural change, but indigenous activists and artists are increasingly exchanging information and experiences across this boundary, and understanding global indigeneity requires similar efforts at crossing political and conceptual boundaries.

Funding from the seed grant will support an interdisciplinary working group at Brown that will meet monthly and culminate in a symposium in late 2013. The symposium will feature a collaborative conversation between leading scholars from throughout the Americas as well as indigenous artists-activists. The ultimate goal of this research group is to produce an edited

volume and a grant proposal aimed at establishing a hemisphere-wide working group to conduct further research.

- **Paja Faudree**, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, Brown University
- **Joshua Tucker**, Assistant Professor of Music, Brown University



## **Perspectives on International Health Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs)**

The project will organize a series of approximately eight seminars, each with two or more speakers to address three central research questions:

- 1) What/Do health-related NGOs contribute to public health in the countries in which they operate?
- 2) How do NGOs attempt to mediate or mitigate forces producing inequalities in health and health care?
- 3) What are the key factors or conditions affecting their successes and failures?

The project will establish and maintain a website with short papers and presentations that summarize the major debates on the roles of third sector organizations. The collaborative work taking place in the seminars will include students and faculty across disciplines, contribute to the publication of three or four scholarly papers in peer reviewed journals or as book chapters, and seek to develop a working group to assess potential applications for National Institutes of Health grants.

- **Ann Dill**, Associate Professor of Sociology, Brown University
- **Linda Cook**, Professor of Political Science, Brown University
- **Geri Augusto**, Visiting Associate Professor of Africana Studies, Brown University
- **Lundy Braun**, Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine and Africana Studies
- **Nitsan Chorev**, Associate Professor of Sociology, Brown University
- **Susan Cu-Uvin**, Professor of Obstetrics & Gynecology and Professor of Medicine and Professor of Health Services, Policy & Practice
- **Masako Ueda Fidler**, Professor of Slavic Languages, Brown University
- **Marida Hollos**, Professor of Anthropology, Brown University
- **Josiah Rich**, Professor of Medicine and Epidemiology