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Gender Studies in the Global South

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Institution
**CYNTHIA NELSON &
 MARTINA RIEKER**

Gender Studies in the Global South

Established in 1999 at the American University in Cairo, the Institute for Gender and Women's Studies (IGWS) is a multipurpose and interdisciplinary research centre that serves scholars, activists and policy-makers interested in gender and women's studies in the Arabic-speaking world, Turkey, the Caucasus, Iran, Central Asia, Western Asia and Africa. The primary function of the institute is to serve as a resource nexus within and through which research projects, conferences, workshops, seminars, policy debates and educational programmes on gender and women's issues are engaged.

Modernities and concomitant liberal articulations of social space and place – delineated by political and cultural visions of the post-colonial world order and its boundaries – have critically informed women's and gender studies over the past few decades. The challenges to modernist and post-colonial geographies and political imaginaries posed in the historical present are increasingly demanding a reconsideration of the frameworks within which gender scholarship has taken place. Envisioning gender studies in the global South demands not only a critical engagement with the grammar of the modern (subaltern/gendered) subject but also its critical repositioning within a new global geography. Recognizing the Middle East as an unsatisfactory and problematic category, the goal of IGWS is to facilitate these demands through a focus on transnational dialogue, cross-regional networking and interdisciplinarity. Although focused on the MENA region as its main target, the institute is committed to fostering scholarly dialogue pertaining to (a) the flows of bodies, ideas and goods between discrete Islamic cultural spaces such as West Asia and the MENA

region, (b) the northern and southern Mediterranean and (c) the Arabic-speaking and sub-Saharan parts of Africa.

To further these objectives IGWS has developed a number of programmatic components to create scholarly networks to explore the demands of the political present for gender studies in the global South.

At present its focus is on planning and organizing workshops, seminars, and conferences to facilitate continuous and substantial dialogue between academics and social researchers across these new philosophical and spatial geographies. Components include:

Conferences: At the first World Congress of Middle East Studies (Mainz, September 2002) IGWS will sponsor a symposium entitled 'Women or Something Like That: Revisiting Gender Studies in the Middle East Field'. The purpose of such symposia in one of the yearly area studies conferences is to bring together a critical mass of scholars to examine (a) areas in which gender studies have animated the Middle East field and the political and academic areas that continue to isolate such approaches and (b) map out productive strategies for gender studies in a region marked by conflict.

Networks: IGWS is an active member of a consortium currently being established between the American University in Cairo and other universities in the MENA region and beyond. The purpose of this consortium is to develop databases on faculty conducting

research on gender issues; organize workshops and conferences on Middle East Gender Studies as a field; and explore interdisciplinary and comparative research foci that would engage graduate students and faculty across the consortium.

Workshops: Together with the Center for Gender and Sexuality Studies at New York University, IGWS is developing a series of three workshops, publications and educational materials on gender and transnational politics. The first two workshops are being planned on the following themes: 'Gendered Bodies, Transnational Politics: Crisis of Liberalism in Middle East Studies' (Cairo, 2003) and 'Sexualized Bodies, Transnational Politics: Emotionality and Desire in Islamic Studies' (New York, 2004).

Research Projects: Together with the Centre for Studies and Research on Women (CSAROW) affiliated with the Faculty of Letters, University of Fez, Morocco, IGWS is developing a comparative research project on 'Gender and Modernist Literacies'.

Journal: Beginning with its first issue in the summer of 2002 the institute will publish a bi-annual academic journal on gender studies in the region.

Much of the energies in gender education, research and practice in the global South are absorbed by and develop in dialogue with non-academic actors and agencies. Thus, in addition to its scholarly and academic mission, IGWS is committed to substan-

tial dialogue between social researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers to create more gender-aware and gender-sensitive action research and policy formulation. In this context IGWS is launching a long-term project entitled 'Reassessing Gender Training in Egypt' in conjunction with the Social Research Center (AUC).

The Institute for Gender and Women's Studies invites interested scholars to participate in developing scholarly dialogues around gender studies across new philosophical and geographical boundaries.

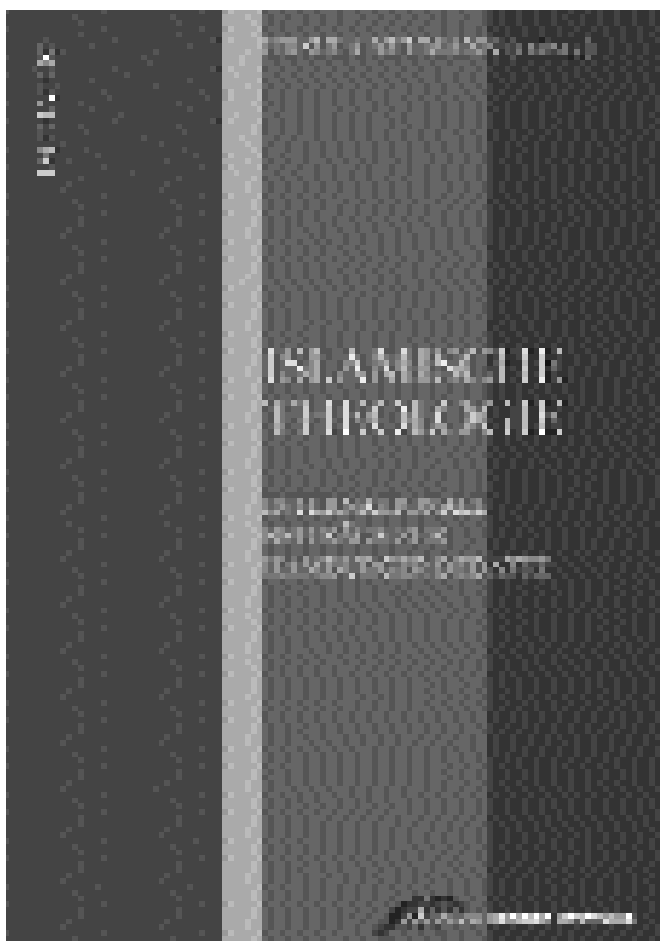
For more information on specific IGWS events, workshops, conferences, the fellows' and scholars' programme, visit the IGWS website: www.aucegypt.edu/igws or write to igws@aucegypt.edu.

To join H-GENDER-MIDEAST, please send a message from the account where you wish to receive mail, to: listserv@h-net.msu.edu (with no signatures or styled text, word wrap off for long lines) and this text: sub h-GENDER-MIDEAST firstname lastname, institution.

Cynthia Nelson, professor of anthropology, is the founder and director of IGWS.

Martina Rieker, assistant professor of modern history, is a member of the IGWS executive committee.

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ISLAMISCHE THEOLOGIE International Contributions to the Debate in Hamburg

In Germany, Islam, as the third largest religious community in the country with more than 3 million Muslims, has no academically recognized higher education programme that focuses on Islamic theology. A conference organized by the Free Hanseatic City of Hamburg's Commissioner for Foreigners in cooperation with the University of Hamburg and the Körber Foundation, addressed the question of establishing a chair for Islamic theology at German universities. Islamic theologians and experts of Islamic studies from Great Britain, the Netherlands, Turkey, South Africa and Indonesia contributed their positions and experience to the debate. The publication, which resulted from this conference, presents examples of the profile of such a chair for Islamic theology, as well as scientific analysis and critical views from the political and religious community of the City of Hamburg. It offers impulses for a profound discussion of 'Islamic Theology' in Germany.

ISLAMISCHE THEOLOGIE

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