

Centre for Settler and Colonial Studies Newsletter - March 2023

Contact us: uow.cass@gmail.com

Dear CASS Members,

This is the first CASS newsletter for 2023 and *we*, Sharon and Cammi, your convenors, would like to hear from *you* about what you want CASS to do this year.



Sharon Crozier De Rosa



Cammi Webb-Gannon

In this newsletter:

- ~ Call for Work-in-Progress facilitators and participants
- ~ Call for ideas for CASS/co-badged events
- ~ Welcome to new members
- ~ Our First 2023 Seminar!
- ~ Blog#1
- ~ Entanglements – what are we doing – where, why, how?
- ~ Spotlight on members' publications

CALL FOR WORK-IN-PROGRESS FACILITATORS AND PARTICIPANTS!

Back by popular demand is the CASS Work-in-Progress series!

Now all we need are suggested sessions – so let us know over the next week or two if you will have an article, chapter, grant application etc that you would like to workshop with our CASS colleagues this year – also let us know when you anticipate having that piece ready to go for comment and we will facilitate a discussion.

Initially, we will conduct these via Zoom so that off campus members can join in – we can do a Doodle poll to figure out times and dates.

CALL FOR IDEAS FOR CASS/CO-BADGED EVENTS

Do you have ideas for seminars that CASS could host or co-facilitate? These could focus on the work of visiting academics or even people working in areas of interest to CASS members who may want to give a Zoom talk. If you send us contacts, we can follow them up.

Maybe there are other events in the pipeline around the university that we could co-facilitate in the interests of cross-fertilization of ideas and research – let us know!

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS!

We would like to extend a warm welcome to our newest member, Lisa Ridzén, a doctoral student from Mid Sweden University. Lisa's research focuses on Sami masculinities. By exploring life stories and the constitution of vulnerability and care among rural northern men in Sweden, she critically investigates the intersections of norms of gender and place with the overall aim of challenging destructive masculinity norms.



Lisa Ridzén

OUR FIRST 2023 SEMINAR!

**This is a joint initiative of CASS and the Future of Rights Centre*

Topic: Sovereignty Stories from Settler Societies

Chair – Cammi Webb-Gannon

Speakers: PhD Candidates in CASS and the Future of Rights Centre

Save the Date: Friday April 21, 2023

Time: 2pm – 3:30pm

Location: TBC

BLOG#1

Contributor: Cammi Webb-Gannon

Topic: Decolonial Feminisms in Oceania

In February, I facilitated a conference session that explored ‘decolonial feminisms in Oceania’ at the Association of Social Anthropology in Oceania annual conference, this year held in Kona, Hawai’i. My co-facilitators were Dr Jenny Munro, an anthropologist at the University of Queensland, and Ms Elvira Rumkabu, an international relations academic at the University of Cenderawasih in West Papua. The session was inspired by desire to look more deeply into the reasons why the term feminism has historically held such deeply hegemonic connotations that it has triggered “allergic” responses in Oceania (Souder-Jaffery in Griffen 2016) and to see whether it could be or should be salvaged. It has been criticised as distracting and divisive in decolonization work – “Given our nationalist context, feminism appeared as just another haole intrusion into a besieged Hawaiian world. Any exclusive focus on women neglected the historical oppression of all Hawaiians and the large force field of imperialism” (Trask 1996, 909), and as blind to its (often) white, middle-class, western positionality (Molisa in Tusitala Marsh 1999, 666). Feminism has also been denounced as non-customary by some Pacific men who have manipulated definitions of custom to limit women’s exercise of power (Otto 1997, 44; Zimmer-Tamakoshi 1995, 122, Jolly 2016, 359). It is perhaps because of these reactions that, as Teresia Teaiwa has pointed out, Pacific feminist scholarship has been “slow to gather momentum” (quoted in Naepi 2016, n.p.). Yet, despite misgivings about the “western monopoly” over feminist discourse (Tusitala Marsh 1999, 667), perhaps in response to the myriad perduring injustices facing women in the Pacific – violence, poverty, and exclusion from leadership to name but a few—Pacific scholars have persisted in seeking to identify the tenets of a “female philosophy of liberation” (Souder-Jaffrey in Griffen 2016).

More than 20 years ago, Selina Tusitala Marsh (1999, 666) questioned whether feminism can be productively transplanted to the Pacific? Or whether indeed the “concept of feminism [has] always existed in the Pacific” (Tusitala Marsh 1999, 666)? And even what a “rejection of feminism as ‘Western’, to a reconceptualization of locally relevant and culturally resonant feminism” might look like in the Pacific (Tusitala Marsh 1999, 666). Reflecting on whether there is space within the broad handle of ‘feminism’ for Indigenous Fijian perspectives, author Sereana Naepi concluded “Feminism in its current form does not speak to my Aunties, so in many ways they are right; feminism does not come into it because until feminisms make space for more ontologies and ways of knowing, they really will not be part of the Fijian conversation” (2016). Naepi’s conclusion demonstrates that Tusitala Marsh’s questions are still relevant today. Two decades on, we might also ask if, and in what ways, access to social media

and digital networking has contributed to the creation and articulation of “vernacularized” (Merry 2006; Monson 2013) feminisms in the Pacific? And whether increased solidarity of action across the Pacific in response to climate change as well as activism against gendered violence has contributed to a reconsideration of these issues within Indigenous feminist frameworks? Have new questions around feminist responses to ongoing colonisation in Kanaky and West Papua, accelerated resource exploitation, and renewed Black and Indigenous identity struggles led to novel ways of thinking about feminism in the Pacific?

Attendees to our session who came to discuss the issues raised above numbered 19 in total. The session commenced with a discussion about varying assumptions across the Pacific concerning the central tenets of feminism. We debated whether feminism was a useful gloss for the types of politics, motivations, criticisms, actions and networks many of us in the session were interested in focusing on and we proposed potential alternative terms including women’s empowerment and women’s rights. The wide-ranging conversation that followed canvassed differences in approaches to and experiences of feminist activism among urban and rural women in the Pacific and among women living ‘at home’ and women in diaspora; the political rhetoric of women’s empowerment at the government level of Pacific countries versus the reality ‘on the ground’; whether and how discourses and the implementation of women’s rights and human rights intersect; whether there has been or should be an analytical shift in thinking about rights ‘translation’ to rights ‘transnationalism’ in Oceania; gender based violence and responses; women’s political representation in Oceania; the relationship between women’s empowerment and age; feminism and class; the regional character of feminism(s); and links between feminism, coloniality and modernity. As an overarching conceptual framing, it was proposed that future contributions in a follow up session could be united by an intersectional approach to thinking about women’s empowerment work in Oceania, from grassroots mobilisation to the role of the state in reform efforts. Participants referenced women’s experiences and feminist networks and movements in Papua New Guinea, West Papua, Fiji, Marshall Islands, Vanuatu, Hawaii, and the Netherlands.

Following the session, we compiled a substantial list of references regarding Indigenous feminisms, decolonial feminisms, and feminisms in the Pacific which I am happy to share with anyone who may be interested.

If you have an idea for a blog, please let us know!

ENTANGLEMENTS

Send us your news – events you've attended, participated in, awards or honours received or given, or talks you've delivered!

Claire Wright



Claire was an invited panelist with Professor Bronwen Dalton, Professor Anne Summers AO, The Hon. Professor Verity Firth AM, Associate Professor Anna Bedford, and Dr Tarunna Sebastian on a *Celebrating International Women's Day* panel at UTS Business School honouring the exceptional leadership contributions that women are making in various fields in support of advancing gender equality.

Call to Action

Marcelo Svirsky recently circulated an open letter, initiated in HSI, in response to UOW Council's decision in April 2022 to adopt the IHRA definition on antisemitism. You are invited to read it and add your signature:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1y0B650iVIU3TEuziTx4WmhBA876gPckmk_6C9GIhX-0/edit

'Imagined Futures: In Conversation with...'

In March, Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, Senior Professor Sue Bennett and Dr Rebecca Ng talked inequality and erasure – past, present and future – in HSI's ~ 'Imagining Futures in a Digital Age: From the imagination of the digital child to the feminist imaginaries of archival activists' session.

Upcoming Events

'To Hell With Drowning' Conference of the Australian Association for Pacific Studies:

<http://pacificstudies.org.au/conference/to-hell-with-drowning-2023/>

MEMBER PUBLICATION SPOTLIGHT

(In each newsletter, we will ‘spotlight’ two of our members’ publications. Let us know if you have a publication you would like spotlighted. Otherwise, we will select these ourselves).

Lisa Slater



Fieldwork in Discomfort, *borderlands*, vol 21, no 2 (2022),
<https://sciendo.com/pdf/10.21307/borderlands-2022-017>

Abstract

Discomfort can make one doubt one’s taken-for-grant accounts of reality. Thus, for settler colonial scholars—such as myself—undertaking collaborative research projects with First Nations communities, discomfort is a necessary companion. In this article, I tune into my own discomfort to explore its generative potential to disrupt my knowledge practices. To do so, I improvise with Lisa Stevenson’s ‘fieldwork in uncertainty’ (2014). Fieldwork in discomfort is paying attention to when my ‘facts’ falter and I butt up against my epistemological limits. I reflect upon moments of discomfort during a collaborative project with the Wolgalu and Wiradjuri First Nations community in BrungleTumut (New South Wales, Australia). The project aims to revitalise the community’s connection to a species of ecological importance: the corroboree frog—a critically endangered and culturally important species, whom the Wolgalu nation call Gyack (Williams, 2019). A collaborative project involving people from different epistemic traditions demands of participants an attentiveness to what is not shared. Afterall, to take care of Gyack requires taking care of, and with, divergent knowledge practices. Discomfort is a method of coming to know what I cannot know.

Keywords: fieldwork, discomfort, First Nations, settler colonial, community-engaged research

Marcelo Svirsky



‘The Marginalization of the Mizrahim: Jewish Syndicalism in the Context of Settler-Colonial Zionism in Palestine before 1948’, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, published online 8.02.2023.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0377919X.2022.2158750>

Abstract

This article investigates the institutional attitudes of the Histadrut (the General Organization of Workers in the Land of Israel) toward Palestine’s Middle Eastern Jews (Mizrahim) between 1920 and the late 1940s. Based on archival evidence and secondary sources, it argues that what Mizrahi workers experienced in their dealings with the Histadrut was not the result of random or unintended abuse but of a political culture that promoted social fragmentation and inequality. The corollary of this argument is that the Mizrahim who arrived immediately after 1948 found themselves thrown into a racial binary mold that had been in the making for about fifty years, beginning with the first waves of Zionist immigration to Palestine.

See also:

‘No march of redemption for Israelis’, *Arena*, published online 5.03.2023.

<https://arena.org.au/no-march-of-redemption-for-israelis-the-netanyahu-governments-attack-on-israels-supreme-court/>

‘The Israeli elephant in the settler-colonial room’, *Postcolonial Studies*, published online 16.06.2022. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13688790.2022.2080153>

‘The Normal Life of Settlers’, *Ethnicities* (special issue: Enacting Settler Responsibilities Towards Decolonisation), 21(6).

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/14687968211062689>