



S I G N S

Call for Papers

Signs Special Issue, “Complexities of Care and Caring”

Over the past four decades of feminist scholarship and practice, notions of care and caring, as noun and verb, have had great traction across disciplinary divides, spurring debate while challenging binaries of equality and difference, public and private, the cold hand of the market and the warmth of home, the rational and irrational, and paid and unpaid labor. We write this call in the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, amid the groundswell of support for #BlackLivesMatter, when indeed the need for renewing such challenges is dramatically clear. Our needs for care, the reality of our embodied vulnerabilities and interdependence, stand in stark relief against the cruel indifference of neoliberal nation-states and global superpowers, with great gulfs in whose needs for care, whose caring labor, and whose fragility we value. Yet at the same time, notions of care and relationality have traveled far from their critical or radical roots in differing strands of feminism, and it is timely to reassess. This special issue invites such reassessment across disciplines, broadly questioning and complicating feminist histories, debates, and politics of care and caring. We also welcome submissions exploring and complicating cultural work on representations of care and caring, whether from the arts, media and popular culture, or literature or literary studies.

The editors invite essays that consider, but are by no means limited to, the following questions:

- What work have concepts of care and caring done in feminist scholarship? And in praxis, for groups, solidarities, and activist orientations? What histories and debates should be revisited or rethought?
- Can care and caring still function as critical or radical concepts? Is care still gendered? Or racialized in differing national contexts?
- Can self-care still be radical? Black feminist Audre Lorde wrote, in her 1988 book *A Burst of Light*, “Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation and that is an act of political warfare.” But in a neoliberal age, is it hopelessly individualized, domesticated, and commodified? Subject to cultural appropriation?
- Are frameworks of care and caring useful for environmental or interspecies politics?
- How have feminists across disciplines and in conversation with critical race and disability scholars understood the relation (or the entanglement) of care and caring to affect, labor, power, harm, and violence? What are the outer limits of the concept?
- What are the histories and futures of global care chains, of marginalized care workers and their struggles in the context of increased structural inequalities?
- How have care and caring been represented, debated, theorized, or problematized in literature, theater, dance, art, film, and/or popular culture? Are there emergent feminist representations or performances of care?
- What is the relation of feminist scholarship on care and caring to law, economics, and philosophy? To notions of autonomy and rights? To theories of the state?
- Can we have caring technologies? Do technologies facilitate caring or further commodification, individualization, and surveillance?

Signs particularly encourages transdisciplinary and transnational essays that address substantive feminist questions, debates, and controversies without employing disciplinary or academic jargon. We seek essays that are passionate, strongly argued, and willing to take risks.

The deadline for submissions is December 15, 2021. The issue will be guest edited by Linda Blum, professor of sociology, Northeastern University; Martha Albertson Fineman, Robert W. Woodruff Professor of Law, Emory University; and Amber Jamilla Musser, professor of American studies, George Washington University.

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