**Workshop Proposal for the International Conference “Crisis and the Social Sciences: New Challenges and Perspectives”**

**Title: Gender and the Economic Crisis in Southern Europe**

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For the last five years Southern European Nations have been in the throes of an immense economic crisis. Many problems have ensued in the labor, social, political and institutional domains, and while both men and women have been affected, women have suffered more in their personal, professional and domestic lives. It is the various austerity programs devised by the IMF, ECB, EU and imposed by the different national governments to alleviate the financial crisis, that are responsible for these widespread problems. To this end, restructuring of public institutions and agencies has been carried out and as a consequence many people have lost their jobs. Heavy cuts in salaries and retirement pensions were made and continue to occur, in both sectors, while, unions and associations (both private and public), are fighting the government “tooth and nail” to no avail. Moreover, to eliminate state deficits, governments have engaged in continuous benefit cuts and institutional reshuffling, thereby seriously jeopardizing the employees. The meagresocial benefits previously allotted for the assistance of women in need (e.g., single mothers, battered women, multiple families, and maternity leaves) have been drastically reduced. Hence, two key questions arise: To what degree do the policies enforced by these governments promote or sustain gender inequality? Does the economic crisis also engender policies which affect gender relations? If so, to what extent?

The purpose of this workshop is twofold: 1) to explore the extent to which South European women have been affected by the economic crisis in their professional and personal lives and what the visions for their future are and 2) the gendered context of government policies related to austerity measures. Since the financial crisis had a widespread impact on the real economy and ultimately on people’s lives, especially on women’s, we desire to know how women cope with the crisis collectively, individually and in terms of geographic location. Toward the first goal of the empirical researches will be conducted. Toward the second research goal we will investigate gender related governmental policies which have been implement during the economic crisis and pertain mainly to salary reductions, pensions, etc.

In attempting to study the effects of the economic crisis in Southern European Nations we use the Mediterranean paradigm: It specifies that these nations share several unique social, environmental, economic, and behavioral characteristics. We observe that there are indeed similarities among nations effected by the present economic crisis. Firstly, the economic crisis has most heavily hit Southern European Nations; secondly all governments, more or less, have reacted to the crisis with similar measures: salary cuts, restructuring, layoffs, heavy reductions of women’s benefits, etc; thirdly, in each country the public has responded similarly *en masse*: strikes, bargaining, protests, domestic violence, immigration, etc. On the other hand, the dynamics of this economic crisis also reveal some variations in governmental reactions, relationships and patterns of individual mobilization between and within these nations. How are these differences connected to domestic political institutions, cultures and traditions and what are these new conditions likely to mean for the development of gender issues? In this study we examine such issues and present new data; we will gage the degree of behavioural change and project which direction this will take in future gender relations and empowerment. Our comparative methodological approaches of inter and intra- country case histories will also focus on gender**-**related policies and politics concerning labour rights, working relations and social policies of the nations under study.