



LUMS

Saida Waheed
Gender Initiative

**SAIDA WAHEED GENDER INITIATIVE
FALL NEWSLETTER
2020**

OVERVIEW



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The Saida Waheed Gender Initiative (SWGII) had a busy fall semester, which included several exciting events and support for student research. Keeping in mind the pandemic and the overall risk of holding in-person events in enclosed spaces we kept all our events online, live streaming them on our Facebook page. We wanted to send along some of the highlights and thank you for supporting the Initiative, and showing interest in our events. Follow us on Facebook and Twitter (genderatlums) to stay updated!

STUDENT RESEARCH

During the summer, as COVID-19 related uncertainty peaked and all of us tried to cope with the extraordinary situation, we felt that students at LUMS interested in writing or presenting their work be given the opportunity to explore and evocate. It was, and in many ways still is, routine to speak about the pandemic as an unprecedented crisis, a rupture of apocalyptic proportions. However, there have been minority voices that have spoken of the pandemic as an intensification of earlier injustices and oppression, environmental, economic, domestic, political. Others still have seen in it an opportunity for a different world, for new relationships to self, family, community, nation, and the world. It has been argued that this is a moment for a re-examination of our desires, politics, critical perspectives, and ideas of time, including the future, present, and past.

In light of this, SWGI announced a call for proposals and provided funds of up to 20,000 PKR to selected grantees. We encouraged proposals for research, artistic, or literary projects, which centre the experiences of women, and queer and trans persons amidst the pandemic. We also welcomed proposals that rethink the pandemic beyond the framework of crisis, and offer new analytic perspectives, experiential insights, political possibilities, and affective reckonings. We will be holding an event next semester so students can present and discuss their projects. We are immensely proud of all our grantees:

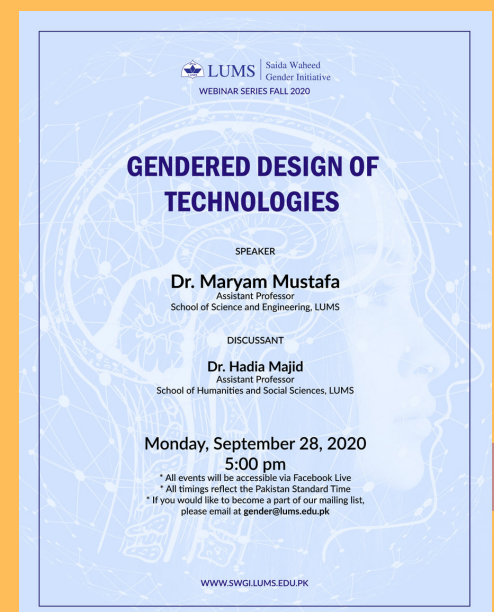
- 'Amidst the Pandemic: Lady Health Workers of Sindh' – by Uswah e Fatima
- 'Domestic Violence in an Age of Online Spaces and Pandemic' – by Noor Fatima, Minahill Khan, and Swaiba Saeed
- 'Female Commuters and Covid-19 in Karachi' – by Ushna Khan
- 'Flitting through time 1918/2020: A study on women and pandemics in the subcontinent' – by Noor Fatima Bokhari
- 'Pandemic Archives: Charting Queer Pakistani Identities' – by Zainab, Urooj, Rameen, and Mashael
- 'Parchhayian (پرچھایاں)' – by Amna Rauf, Huda Mehdi Shah, Kanza Hassan, and Zil E Huma
- 'The Gendered Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Mental Health of Healthcare Workers in Pakistan' – by Hira Farooq, Rida Fatima, Zainab Farooq, and Zumer Zia

SEMINAR SERIES

Since its inception SWGI has been hosting seminars throughout the Fall and Spring semesters, inviting scholars of gender and sexuality studies as well as scholars whose work uses gender and/sexuality as a central category of research. This year has been especially challenging for everyone as COVID-19 disrupted what we perceived as the 'normal'. Despite the multiple challenges and uncertainties, SWGI brought its audience within the LUMS community and beyond four exciting seminars to cover a wide array of topics. We were joined by amazing scholars, both as speakers and discussants.

Gendered Design of Technologies by Dr. Maryam Mustafa

Dr. Mustafa is an Assistant Professor at the School of Science and Engineering, LUMS. Dr. Mustafa's work is interdisciplinary in nature and draws from cognitive sciences, human perception, sociology and anthropology to inform the design of ICT interventions. More recently her work has focused on the gendered design of technologies to promote equitable access for women in Pakistan. She was joined by Dr. Hadia Majid as discussant who is Assistant Professor, Department of Economics & Director, Saida Waheed Gender Initiative, LUMS.



The talk explored how feminist thought is a natural ally to the design of technologies because of its central commitments to issues such as agency, fulfilment, identity, equity, empowerment, and social justice. Dr. Mustafa discussed her research, which engages feminist perspectives and approaches towards designing technologies for/with underserved communities.



zoom

In particular, she spoke about designing for maternal and mental healthcare in Pakistan, designing for digital financial services targeted towards women and how women in the Global South have leveraged technologies to navigate around restrictions on work and mobility outside the home and claim financial independence by setting up thriving businesses. Please [click here to watch](#).

Indian Sex Life: Sexuality and the Colonial Origins of Modern Social Thought by Dr. Durba Mitra

For our second seminar, we were joined by Dr. Durba Mitra to discuss her new book, 'Indian Sex Life: Sexuality and the Colonial Origins of Modern Social Thought'. Dr. Mitra is an Assistant Professor of Women, Gender, and Sexuality and Carol K. Pforzheimer Assistant Professor at the Radcliffe Institute at Harvard University. She works at the intersection of feminist and queer studies. Her research and teaching focus on the history of sexuality, the history of science and epistemology, and gender and feminist thought in South Asia and the colonial and postcolonial world.

Indian Sex Life

Sexuality and the Colonial Origins of Modern Social Thought

Durba Mitra



She was joined by Dr. Ali Raza, who is a historian of modern South Asia and an Associate Professor of History at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, LUMS. He is the author of *Revolutionary Pasts: Communist Internationalism in Colonial India* (2020). The discussion primarily focused on Dr. Mitra's book, which demonstrates how ideas of deviant female sexuality became foundational to modern social thought. In *Indian Sex Life*, Dr. Mitra shows how deviant female sexuality, particularly the concept of the prostitute, became the primary way to think and write about Indian society.

She reveals that ideas of deviant female sexuality were critical to debates about social progress and exclusion, caste domination, marriage, sexual violence, widowhood and inheritance, women's performance, the trafficking of girls, abortion and infanticide, industrial and domestic labour, indentured servitude, and ideologies about the dangers of Muslim sexuality.



She demonstrates how the intellectual history of modern social thought is based in a dangerous civilizational logic built on the control and erasure of women's sexuality. This logic continues to hold sway in present-day South Asia

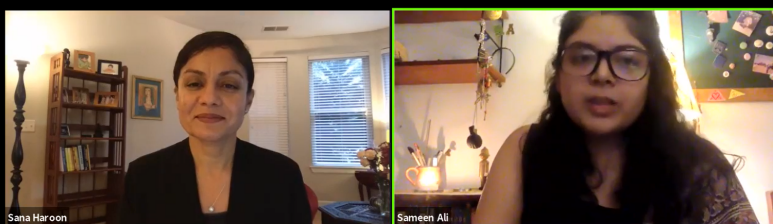
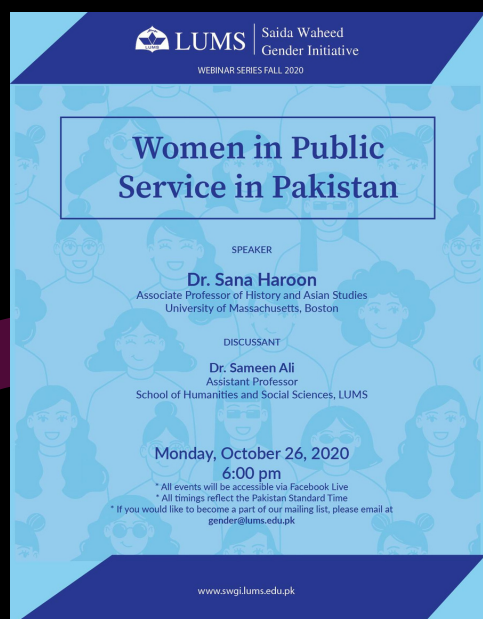
and the postcolonial world. The conversation also explored the enduring importance of the history of the control and erasure of women's sexuality for thinking about issues of sexuality, sexual violence, and women's lives historically and today in South Asia. Please [click here](#) to watch.

‘Women in Public Service in Pakistan’

by Dr. Sana Haroon

Dr. Haroon is Associate Professor of History and Asian Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston where she teaches courses on South Asian history, Pakistan history and oral history. She has authored two books, *Frontier of Faith* and *The Mosques of Colonial South Asia*, and a variety of papers, and is co-leader of the Women in Public Service in Pakistan oral history project at LUMS.

She was joined by Dr. Sameen A. Mohsin Ali as discussant. Dr. Mohsin is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, LUMS. Her research and teaching interests include state capacity and bureaucratic and party politics in South Asia, public health governance, and the politics of donor engagement in LMICs.

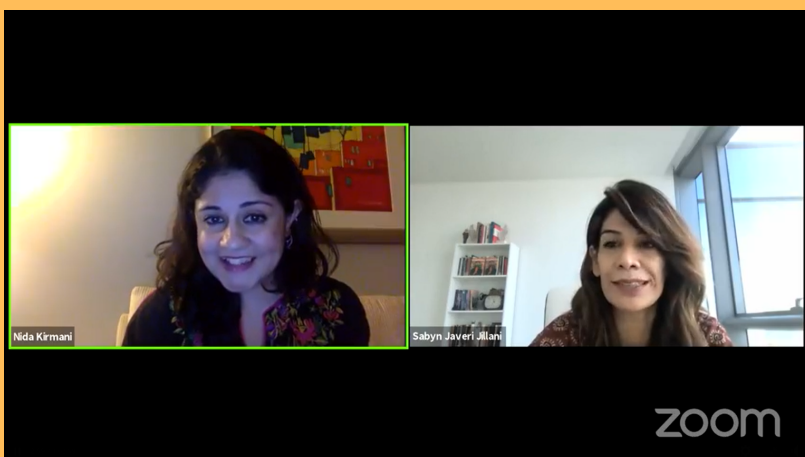
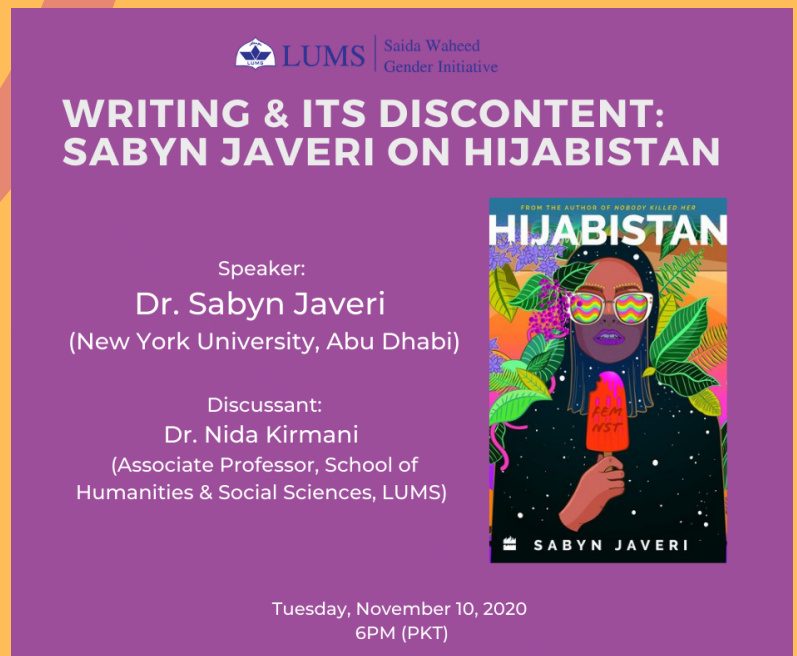


The talk explores women's sense of belonging during their recruitment, training, mentoring, networking in the public service in Pakistan. This oral history of women's professionalism engages and expands documented accounts of women's participation in public and cultural life and also explores the potential of oral history to offer new insights about historical change in South Asia. Please [click here to watch](#).

Writing & its Discontent: Sabyn Javeri on Hijabistan'

by Dr. Sabyn Javeri

Our last talk of the seminar series was by Dr. Sabyn Javeri who teaches writing at New York University, Abu Dhabi. She is the author of 'Hijabistan' and the novel 'Nobody Killed Her'. She has edited two anthologies of student writing titled, 'The Arzu Anthology of Student Voices'. She has won the Oxonian Review short story prize and has been shortlisted for the Tibor Jones, Meridian, Leaf Books, JLF, Adab and Publishing Next awards.



Her research interests include transnational feminism, South Asian literature and creative writing. She was joined by Dr. Nida Kirmani as discussant. Dr. Kirmani is Associate Professor of Sociology in the School of Humanities and Social Science, at LUMS.

She has published widely on issues related to gender, Islam, women's movements, development and urban studies in India and Pakistan. In this conversation, Dr. Javeri discusses how the idea for her book originated, the process of writing the book, and finally, its reception. She focuses on her experience of writing stories which subvert traditional expectations of gendered norms and of crossing boundaries of self-censorship and voicing experience. In this talk she also explored the responsibility and ethics of representing "true" material from life history or observation, and the reception of a woman writer's work. Please click [here](#) to watch.

COLLABORATIONS

At SWGI we value collaborating with other centres and initiatives across LUMS and institutes beyond as well.

‘Remembering Justice Ginsburg: Confronting Women’s Challenges in Pakistan’s Legal Fraternity’

Saida Waheed Gender Initiative in collaboration with LUMS Live Sessions conducted a session in memoriam of Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. In this session we were joined by Justice (R) Nasira Iqbal Former Judge, High Court of Pakistan; Ms. Reema Omer, International Legal Adviser for South Asia at International Commission of Jurists (ICJ); Ms. Nida Usman Chaudhary, Founder, Lahore Education and Research Network (LEARN) and Women in Law Initiative Pakistan and Ms. Zehra Zaidi, Adjunct Faculty, School of Law, LUMS.



Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the topper of Columbia Law’s Class of 1959, could find no law firm in New York willing to hire a female attorney. Yet, she was not one to give up. Taking to academia, she became a Professor of Law at Rutgers Law School, teaching some of the first female law students there. In 1971, she appeared before the Nine with her lead brief in *Reed v. Reed*, where the court was considering whether men should be preferred over women as executors. Ginsburg won the first gender discrimination case of the court in USA. In 1972, she co-founded the Women’s Rights Project at the American Civil Liberties Union and, under this banner, took numerous causes to the court on which she would one day go on to sit as a Justice herself. Interestingly, the current legal landscape in Pakistan is quite similar for female lawyers to what Ginsburg consistently fought against in the US. It continues to be a hostile and unwelcoming environment for them, with little progress over the years. While women are increasingly taking up space in public and private law schools across the country, their presence is almost non-existent in the top echelons of legal practice and the judiciary. This session aimed to unpack and discuss Justice Ginsburg’s legacy and how it speaks to the women in the legal fraternity in Pakistan. Please click [here](#) to watch.

The Women's Summit 2020

Saida Waheed Gender initiative joined the Standing Committee on Gender Mainstreaming & Women Development - Punjab Assembly, the Canadian High Commission, Shirkat Gah- Women's Resource Centre, World Bank and UN Women as a policy and advocacy partner for the Women' Summit 2020. The Summit explored solutions and put forward recommendations on key areas including women's political participation, gender responsive disaster management systems and skill development for the future of work.

WOMEN'S SUMMIT
TOWARDS A
VIOLENCE FREE,
GENDER-EQUAL
AND **INCLUSIVE FUTURE**

December 14, 2020
Live on
<https://web.facebook.com/shirkatgahdotorg/>
Time 12:30 PM

Panel 2 **Creating Gender Responsive Disaster Management Systems**

FAREEHA UMMAR
Manager Women's Economic Empowerment, UN Women

HUMAIRA SHEIKH
Director Shirkat Gah

RAJA KHURRAM
Director General PDMA PUNJAB

DR. HADIA MAJID
Assistant Professor LUMS Director, SWGI

cdpr **PPWF** **LUMS** **Saida Waheed Gender Initiative** **P@SHA** **#THINKFEST**
Come, Think, Question

Our faculty director, Dr. Hadia Majid joined the summit as a panellist for the second panel, "Creating Gender Responsive Inclusive Disaster Management Systems'. Dr. Majid added to this conversation through her talk titled, 'Engendering Responses through Data'. She argued that we can harness data to design responses to reduce inequalities in the future. The key lies in making holistic use of data – characterizing the problem, understanding the underlying mechanisms while devising appropriate interventions, shared Dr. Majid. She further added, that for interventions to be truly effective we must make women a part of the process, including not just their needs and constraints in the design but also incorporating the solutions that they themselves highlight.

The event can be viewed here.

We are already planning an exciting line-up for the Spring semester and are keeping our fingers crossed that the situation improves so that we can safely hold in-person events. Till that is not a possibility we will be holding online events only. We will keep you posted and share our calendar soon. In the meantime, we wish you and your loved ones well during these trying times and hope you are taking all necessary precautions to get through this in the best possible health and spirits!



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