



**IGDS**  
INSTITUTE FOR GENDER &  
DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

# GRADUATE RESEARCH SEMINARS

The Institute for Gender and Development Studies  
invites the campus community to the upcoming  
Graduate Research Seminars

Date: **Monday, March 17th 2014**

Time: **9:00 a.m. through 12 Noon**

Location: **IGDS Seminar Room, The UWI, St. Augustine Campus**



9:00 -10:00 a.m. **Nirmala Chatar**

## **Indo-Trinidadian Women and Adjustment to Widowhood in the 21st Century**

Widowhood is a major life transition that is stressful for both men and women but particularly difficult for some women because of societal and cultural pressures. Widowhood is experienced differently by widows of different cultures, some of whom experience particularly harsh realities. Women of Indian descent in Trinidadian society have been affected by some forms of cultural oppression or sanctions and are highly influenced by Indian culture. Caribbean culture is very unique and even though the Caribbean comprises a special blend of many cultures, each group has kept some of its own traditions. This research will explore these oppressive sanctions for Indo Trinidadian widows and how they adjust and transition into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Supervisor: Prof. Patricia Mohammed



10:10 - 11:10 a.m. **Rachael Espinet**

## **To Queer or not to Queer: Interrogating Bodies in Shani Mootoo's *Valmiki's Daughter***

Shani Mootoo's *Valmiki's Daughter* is a novel that disrupts the heteronormative perception of the typical middle class Indo-Trinidadian family. I interpret this book to utilise the aspect of queer theory which shows the fluidity of gender as it attempts to dismantle the gender roles and performance that we are taught to maintain. Queer theory is a postmodernist derived theory that is not strictly defined because of its fluidity and inability to fit into a category. This inability to categorise persons presents itself as problematic when essentialist terms that are used to establish the status quo have been used to define society. *Valmiki's Daughter* interrogates this disruption of identity and the way a queer body is placed in society. Mootoo constructs her characters as queer bodies who have to negotiate definitions of their identity with the influence of their space, culture, class, education and family. Literature is often a critique on society, therefore I shall use a gendered analysis through a literary lens on *Valmiki's Daughter* as I seek to view how Mootoo constructs the queering of bodies and gender performances in contemporary Trinidad.

Supervisor: Prof. Patricia Mohammed

Members of the academic staff and postgraduate students are invited and are asked to be **seated by 8.50 a.m.**

For more information contact IGDS Tel: 662 2002 Ext 83573/83577 | Email: [igds@sta.uwi.edu](mailto:igds@sta.uwi.edu)  
Website: <http://sta.uwi.edu/igds/> | facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/IGDSStAugustineUnit/>