

INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY

Einstein Drive
Princeton, New Jersey 08540

**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
ACADEMIC YEAR 2011-2012**

INSTRUCTIONS for REFEREES

_____ has selected you as a reference for his/her application to be a Member in the School of Social Science during the 2011-12 academic year. We would appreciate your evaluation of the candidate's proposed research, and his or her ability to carry it out.

Please prepare your reference as a PDF attachment, and email to sssrecs@ias.edu, with "Reference for CANDIDATE'S NAME" in the subject line. Also, be sure to include your own name, title and institution within the text of the reference letter.

Reference emails must be received by November 1, 2010.

Background

Each year, the School of Social Science invites around fifteen to twenty scholars from a large applicant pool. The group is interdisciplinary and international, and scholars are expected to pursue their own research. A completed doctorate or equivalent is required of all applicants.

The following thematic focus for 2011-12 is neither an exclusive nor excluding theme; it is expected that only one-third of the accepted scholars will pursue work relating to this theme. We describe it below in case it is helpful to you in composing your reference letter.

Moralities

Moral issues – viewed broadly – have become crucial in the public sphere. Whether they concern abortion, stem cell research, defense of human rights, control of immigration, penal treatment of delinquency, social responses to poverty, humanitarian justifications for war or interpretation of the financial crisis, moral arguments and moral sentiments are constantly mobilized in policy decisions. The inscription of this recent evolution in a longer history of the formation of moral subjectivities certainly needs to be explored. Similarly, encounters and conflicts between moral models should be analyzed.

The politics of moralities manifests itself in the everyday life of institutions. Justice, police, prison, education, medicine, mental health, social work are privileged domains for the study of moral economies. Situations of violence, suffering, exclusion, discrimination, and stigmatization also involve the construction of moral communities and boundaries, moral categories and judgments. In all these cases, moralities are not given realities: they are combined with affects and norms, just as the moral sphere is closely linked to law and religion. Social scientists themselves are personally involved in these moral issues.

Interest in moral issues is certainly not recent. Philosophers have always dealt with morality; historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and economists have analyzed the formation and implementation of moral norms and values; and emerging fields, such as moral psychology and neuroethics, propose innovative understandings. But how can we articulate these disciplinary paradigms? How could the study of morality move beyond formal dilemmas to comprehend the ordinary functioning of social action? How could the interpretation of moralities resist reduction to a choice between relativism and universalism? How are moral economies permanently negotiated and transformed in confrontations with each other? How are moral and political issues increasingly associated, particularly around human rights and humanitarian intervention? How can social scientists continue to develop their critical approach when accounting for situations and facts so morally loaded? Under the direction of James D. Wolfensohn Professor Didier Fassin, these are some issues the seminar—which is the second part of a two-year cycle on "Values in a Changing World"—will examine.

Should you wish more information about the Institute for Advanced Study, please visit our website at www.ias.edu.