

Rutgers-Newark's Provost's Research Day to Examine Forces Shaping World Events April 20

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(NEWARK) – Current events such as the violent war raging in Iraq or the mushrooming worldwide AIDS epidemic often raise deeper, more fundamental questions: Do human beings have an innate biological tendency to wage war? Why do some young women who know about the risks of getting sexually transmitted diseases – and have even been treated for them – continue to engage in behaviors that can get them reinfected?

A dozen scholars from a wide variety of disciplines – including anthropology, history, neuroscience, nursing, psychology and business, among others – will address such diverse topics at Rutgers-Newark's Provost's Annual Research Day April 20, 2:30-5 p.m., at the University Club in the Paul Robeson Campus Center in Newark. The researchers will be drawn from Rutgers-Newark, the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT), the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ), and the Newark-based Public Health Research Institute (PHRI).

"Many of this year's presentations tackle topics related to issues that are currently receiving extensive coverage in the media," said Rutgers-Newark Provost Steven Diner. "These presentations, in addition to allowing faculty colleagues and students a look at what is going on in other departments, also offer us insights into what may be the driving forces behind current events, as well as the behaviors that fill our day-to-day lives."

For example, the ongoing combat in Iraq and Afghanistan – among other regions – makes the work of Brian Ferguson, a professor of sociology and anthropology at Rutgers-Newark, especially timely. Ferguson's talk will examine whether an inborn human tendency to wage war really exists. "Two important pillars of these arguments are claims that humans share with chimpanzees a propensity for lethal intergroup conflict, and that archeology supports the presence of war throughout our distant past," Ferguson observed. He will offer counter-arguments, including archeological evidence that suggests human wars were rare to non-existent prior to about 10,000 years ago.

Rachel Jones, an assistant professor at Rutgers College of Nursing, is also studying an issue of vital importance to the public welfare: the mindset of young urban women who engage in unprotected sex despite being well aware of the risks. She will present the results of her research, which used a Sexual Pressure Scale (SPS) that she developed to survey participants. "Study findings indicated that over one-third of the women engaged in HIV risk behavior," Jones noted, adding that the data has important implications for public health programs.

To find out more about the topics of other Provost's Annual Research Day presentations, go to www.newark.rutgers.edu/research.

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