



**Call for Papers: Special Issue of the *Journal of International Women's Studies***

**Feminist Hermeneutics and its Critique of Net Deficit:  
Worldmaking beyond Neoliberalism**

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When social everydayness becomes calculative and transactional, it shapes and immunizes certain lives—the lives of the economically privileged—from the pain of loss. What gains prominence in the façade of economics is a discursive dialectic of waste and value. The concept of “deficit,” then, becomes a kind of public condemnation of people who are considered to add little economic value. The demarcation and subsequent condemnation of “deficit” lives can be linked to many people living at the margins, particularly women. This identification and legitimization of economic value as the only important metric for understanding humanity has been the defining feature of what Nancy Fraser (2022) calls “cannibal capitalism,” a system that underpins, drives, and energizes our neoliberal extractive regimes.

Interdisciplinary in scope, this proposed special issue of the *Journal of International Women's Studies* offers a counterargument to extractive forms of capitalism: if we question this obsession with the notion of deficit, and engage with the work of care, repair, and labour, which are so integral in preserving and maintaining our lives and social order, we will better (re)cognize the limiting and anti-feminist emphasis upon deficit within the capitalist order of endless accumulation and expropriation. We can then focus on the essential work of nourishing human society. To see human beings as a deficit is a sign of absurdity and brutality. Following the work of Emma Holten's *Deficit: How Feminist Economies Can Change the World* (2025), this special issue interrogates the deficit view to critically analyse, reflect, and provide interventionist approaches to the lives of women who have been systematically pushed to the margins---both by state and patriarchal structures---in the neoliberal era. Before Emma Holten's critique of deficit discourse, socialist feminists had already shown how capitalism relies on women's unpaid care and domestic work. Emerging from labour movements, thinkers like Silvia Federici (1975), Mariarosa Dalla Costa (1972), and Selma James (1972) linked household labour to wider class and gender inequalities. Also, scholars like Heidi Hartmann (1979) and Zillah Eisenstein (1979) advanced socialist feminism by showing how capitalism and patriarchy operate as interlocking systems, arguing for a unified framework that links women's material exploitation with patriarchal power. They argued that capitalism fundamentally depended upon the unpaid reproductive and care labour performed by women within households. Yet, it treated them as “non-productive” or “outside” the realm of value by conventional economic models (Hartmann, 1979; Einstein, 1979). Feminist economists like Marilyn Waring (1988), Nancy Folbre (1994), and Diane Elson (1995) built on these insights and challenged the exclusion of unpaid and care work from national accounts and economic theory. Waring's *If Women Counted* (1988) demonstrated how the System of National Accounts (SNA), and GDP, systematically erase women's domestic labour and ecological care from what counts as economic output. Recent feminist thinkers such as Nancy Fraser (2022) and Emma Holten (2025) continue this genealogy. Fraser's notion of “cannibal

capitalism” exposes how contemporary capitalism consumes the very social and ecological bases on which it depends, including care work. Holten also emerges from this legacy but gives it a new focus---how the neglect of care and reproduction has created a “deficit” in how societies calculate value. This re-centring of care foregrounds sustainability, interdependence, and collective survival as essential values for a feminist re-worlding of economics. What this special issue proposes is to frame a new feminist hermeneutics (Dwivedi, 2023) that exposes the drawbacks of our state-capital nexus, abetted by patriarchal norms.

That is why this special issue is interdisciplinary in nature, inviting submissions from humanities and social sciences scholars who engage with a feminist critique of deficit ideology. The special issue positions feminist solidarity at the forefront of our “planetary habitability” (Dimock, 2020). It situates deficit not only within the field of economics but also as a way of life, where our relationships and modes of living are becoming more transactional in nature. As Elton (2025) avers, “feminist economics sees things differently: for us, caring for each other is a constant in all our lives” (p. 8). This special issue identifies feminist hermeneutics not just as a terminology, but a site of activism, a work of care and repair – all so central to human embodiment.

Foregrounding a feminist critique of deficit discourse, the issue will examine ontological conditions of vulnerability, fragility, interdependence, and embodied futurity as critical sites of feminist inquiry and resistance. This special issue aims to grapple with questions such as: How do women’s bodies demarcated by notions of precarity—material, affective, or epistemic—highlight the limits of our social fabric and the ethics of care in our time? In what ways can an interdisciplinary approach help us to navigate and reclaim such precarious bodies in the neoliberal age?

Contributions are invited, but not limited to, these topics:

- Neoliberal and precarious bodies
- Hermeneutics of feminist economies
- Feminist critiques of deficit ideologies
- Precarity and deficit
- Activism, solidarity, and repair as feminist economics
- Radical care and collective survival
- Institutionalising gendered violence
- Intersectional and decolonial feminist reflections
- Theorising resistance and agency for collective futures
- Feminist futures

Please submit a 200-word abstract that clearly explains how your study will contribute to, revise, or depart from existing debates around the themes of this special issue. Once abstracts are selected, the final submission should consist of: a 5,000-7,000-word article, including a 200-word abstract, 5-7 keywords, a list of references (only cited works), an AI disclosure statement, and a 100-word author’s bio. For further details related to submission of full articles, please visit: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/policies.html>

**Deadline for abstract proposals** (150 words): 1 February, 2026

**Email:** [precaritycare@gmail.com](mailto:precaritycare@gmail.com)

**Notice that your abstract has been selected:** 1, March, 2026

**Submission of full papers** (5,000-7,000 words for articles): 30 October, 2026

Peer Review and Revision process: Nov. 2026-April 2027

Submitted to JIWS for Final Editorial Acceptance: July 2027

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