

SEX, MONEY, AND POWER IN THE POSTCOLONIAL WORLD

Freshman Seminar 70S / Fall 2020

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Class meets on Wednesday on
Zoom, between 12:00-2:45pm.
Office Hours: By Appointment.

With globalization, sex—everywhere—has become more central to who we are as citizens and consumers, how we gain rights and resources, and how we relate to others as members of a specific race, ethnicity, region, or culture. Worldwide, states invest or disinvest in people according to how they have sex, adopt gender identities, or sustain sexual morality. Terrorist organizations claim to use violence to reestablish bastions of piety and sexual propriety; various populist movements imagine immigrants and refugees to threaten their societies, in part, by failing to uphold the sexual norms of adopting countries; and transnational NGOs and activists seek to “rescue” or “rehabilitate” sex workers, gays, lesbians, transgender, and other people vulnerable for their intimate and social lives. The growing importance of sex to a global consumer culture only heightens the rush to secure societies from the so-called “perversions of globalization.” Tourists now travel for sex to various destinations in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean; poor, unemployed men and women, in former colonies, sometimes use sex as a means of enrichment and empowerment; and amidst the rise of religious fundamentalisms, commodity ads incite youths to consume sex along other goods to build authentic selves. In this seminar, we ask: Why does sexuality become so central to how we imagine our world and futures? Why is sex so important in defining us, as subjects and populations? And how do older colonial stereotypes of race, ethnicity, and culture shape sexuality politics in the new global order? To address these questions, we read about how sex relates to politics and the economy in countries shaped by the histories of colonialism in Africa, Latin America, South Asia, and Europe; watch documentaries about prostitution and sex tourism; and jointly curate a small museum exhibit about sexuality in the postcolonial world.

Course Requirements

Students are expected to attend all classes, do the readings, and come prepared to participate actively in class discussions. Assignments for this course, include the following:

- ❑ *Reading Journal & Weekly Questions:* Please keep notes, whether handwritten or typed, of the important topics, concepts, and theories you come across in the readings and that you wish to remember or to discuss in class. Your reading journal can also include an artistic component: drawings, schemes, tables that help you reflect on the materials in this seminar. Based on these notes, for each class, prepare one short question on the readings *and* explain briefly why your question is important (100-150 words). Post your question on our Canvas discussion board two hours before the start of class at the very latest.

- ❑ *Introducing the Readings in Class.* Each week two or three students will initiate discussion by raising a set of issues and questions related to the readings. These students will meet for at least 40 minutes before class to discuss and prepare the questions. Briefly introduce what you think are the the main points of the readings assigned for that day and pose two questions for class discussion. A sign-up sheet will be filled out during the first class. I expect that each student will present at least twice during the semester. Each presentation should last no more than 15 minutes (Please plan to fit your points within this time frame).
- ❑ *Mid-term and Final Response Essays:* For each essay, you must choose one recurrent concept you encountered in the readings and follow it through two or more of the texts we read in the respective part of the semester. Each paper should be no longer than 5 pages, double-spaced. Mid-term papers are due in class in Week 7. Final papers are due *December 9*.
- ❑ *Short Research Essay.* At the beginning of the semester, you should consult friends, newspapers, or the internet in order identify a current event, movement, activist group, NGO, or artistic production focused centrally on sexuality and gender in a postcolonial context (this may include former colonies but also metropolises, settler colonies, ex-Soviet countries, etc). Once you identified your *case*, think about why it is interesting, how it might speak to the themes of the seminar, and why your friends and colleagues might want to know about it. Once the topic has been approved by your instructor, you will research it, read up on the context in which it takes place and write an engaging, yet critical blog entry of no more than 1000 words. Then, find a suitable photograph to accompany your blog entry. You will submit two drafts of this essay throughout the semester and will also comment on the draft of a classmate. (An assignment sheet with further instructions will be distributed at a closer date). First draft is due *October 7*; review of classmate's draft due *October 14*; final draft due *November 18*.
- ❑ *Exhibit.* Based on the topic of your short research essay, you should take or choose a photograph or drawing that offers us a “window” into the phenomenon you described. Then, write a 150-word caption for an exhibit (on Canvas) that will display your image. Please submit a high-resolution image with the caption by *November 18*. During the class, we will display your images in in an online exhibit as part of our attempt to draw conclusions on the work of this seminar. (An assignment sheet with further instructions will be distributed at a closer date)

Required Texts

Please find to the following books. All other readings are available on Canvas.

- ❑ Kulick, Don. 1998. *Travesti: Sex, Gender, and Culture among Brazilian Transgender Prostitutes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- ❑ Lorway, Robert. 2015. *Namibia's Rainbow Project: Gay Rights in an African Nation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- ❑ Meiu, George Paul. 2017. *Ethno-erotic Economies: Sexuality, Money, and Belonging in Kenya*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- ❑ Puri, Jyoti. 2016. *Sexual States: Governance and the Struggle over the Anti-sodomy Law in India*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Weekly Schedule

- WEEK 1
Sept. 9
- INTRODUCTION – *overview of the seminar*
- ❑ Alexander, M. Jacqui. 1994. “Not Just (Any) Body Can Be a Citizen: The Politics of Law, Sexuality, and Postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas. *Feminist Review* 48:5-23.

Short Film: “I Came Here to Be Free” (Part I, II, III); directed by Neo Musangi

PART I SEX, GENDER, & SEXUALITY FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

- WEEK 2
Sept. 16
- THE INVENTION OF SEX – *historical contexts, working definitions*
- ❑ Oyěwùmí, Oyèrónké. 1997. “Visualizing the Body: Western Theories and African Subjects.” In Oyěwùmí, O. *The Invention of Woman: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*. Pp. 1-30. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
 - ❑ Pigg, Stacy Leigh. 2005. “Globalizing the Facts of Life.” In V. Adams and S. Pigg (eds) *Sex in Development: Science, Sexuality, and Morality in Global Perspective*. Pp. 39-65. Durham: Duke University Press.
 - ❑ Ouma, Christopher and Mphati Mutloane. 2014. “Performing Queer ‘in Time and Space’: A ‘Politics of the Event.’” In Matebeni Z. (ed.) *Reclaiming Afrikan: Queer Perspectives on Sexual and Gender Identities*. Pp. 37-43. Athlone: Modjiaji.

- WEEK 3
Sept. 23
- BECOMING A SEXUAL SUBJECT – *bodies, sex, work, love, and relationships*
- ❑ Kulick, Don. 1998. *Travesti: Sex, Gender, and Culture among Brazilian Transgender Prostitutes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Read pp. 1-95)

- WEEK 4
Sept. 30
- ❑ Kulick, Don. 1998. *Travesti: Sex, Gender, and Culture among Brazilian Transgender Prostitutes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Read pp. 96-133; 141-147; 191-238)

PART II THE SEXUAL COMMODITY: RACE, ETHNICITY, AND CAPITAL

- WEEK 5
Oct. 7
- THE COLONIAL POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION
- Note:* This class will be hosted by the Harvard Art Museum.
- ❑ Lewis, Desiree. 2011. “Representing African Sexualities.” In Tamale S. (ed.) *African Sexualities: A Reader*. Pp.199-216. Oxford: Pambazuka Press.

- ❑ Najamabadi, Afsane. 2005. *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (Read pp. 1-60)

Due: Short Research Essay – First Draft

WEEK 6 MARKETS OF ETHNIC SEXUALITY
Oct. 14

- ❑ Meiu, George Paul. 2017. *Ethno-erotic Economies: Sexuality, Money, and Belonging in Kenya*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Read Introduction, & Ch. 1, 2).

Due: Review of Classmate's Research Essay

WEEK 7 ❑ Meiu, George Paul. 2017. *Ethno-erotic Economies: Sexuality, Money, and Belonging in Kenya*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Chapters 3, 4, 5).
Oct. 21

Due: Mid-term Paper

PART III SEXUAL RIGHTS, CITIZENSHIP, AND THE STATE

WEEK 8 TECHNOLOGIES OF CITIZENSHIP – *sexuality, desire, and subjectivity*
Nov. 4

- ❑ Lorway, Robert. 2015. *Namibia's Rainbow Project: Gay Rights in an African Nation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. (Read Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2)

WEEK 9 ❑ Lorway, Robert. 2015. *Namibia's Rainbow Project: Gay Rights in an African Nation*.
Nov. 11 Bloomington: Indiana University Press. (Read Chapters 3, 4, 5, and Conclusion)

Short Films: "Stories of Our Lives" (2014) directed by Jim Chuchu (62 min)

WEEK 10 THE BIOPOLITICAL STATE – *sexuality, discipline, regulation*
Nov. 18

- ❑ Puri, Jyoti. 2016. *Sexual States: Governance and the Struggle over the Anti-sodomy Law in India*. Durham: Duke University Press. (Read Chapters 1 & 2)

Due: Final Draft of the Short Research Essay; Photograph and Caption

WEEK 11 ❑ Puri, Jyoti. 2016. *Sexual States: Governance and the Struggle over the Anti-sodomy Law in India*. Durham: Duke University Press. (Read Chapters 4, 6, & "Afterlives")
Dec. 2

Dec. 9 Due: Final Paper