



Short Course Overview

Advancing Sexuality Studies: a short course on
sexuality theory and research methodologies

Developed by:

The Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS)

La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia *and*

The International Association for the Study of Sexuality, Culture and Society

(IASSCS)

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Short Course Project Team

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Curriculum Working Group

The short course was developed with the support of a Curriculum Working Group (CWG). The role of the CWG was to provide information and advice on logistical, intellectual, pedagogic or procedural details relevant to the development of curriculum; the content of the curriculum; and the development and allocation of tasks and consultancies. Invitations to participate in the CWG were issued by the project team on the basis of relevant professional expertise in the intersecting fields of sexuality theory, research methodology and development theory and practice.

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¹ To end October 2009.

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The IASSCS–ARCSHS Collaboration

A Collaboration Committee enabled regular communication and consultation between ARCSHS and IASSCS. The Committee was co-chaired by Professor Gary Dowsett (ARCSHS) and Professor Carlos Caceres (IASSCS). Its members included Dr Sean Slavin (Project Coordinator), Dr Diane Di Mauro and Dr Huso Yi (IASSCS Board Members) and Ms Ruth Iguiniz (IASSCS Executive Secretary). The committee met face-to-face a number of times as well as holding regular telephone and Skype conference calls.

Background

This short course was developed in response to a growing recognition of the need for advanced training in Critical Sexuality Studies in developing countries.* The field of Critical Sexuality Studies is multifaceted, crossing several social science and humanities disciplines. The commonality, however, is that Critical Sexuality Studies work focuses on the shifting relationships of power, knowledge, context, and culture. Development of the course began with an international audit of sexuality training. This was intended as a context-setting exercise for the development of course materials. The audit provided an overview of the existing courses, curricula, resources and pedagogical approaches for advanced training in sexuality research and theory. It also enabled the course developers to identify current key theories and research methodologies in the field of Critical Sexuality Studies. The extent, range and nature of current social science research activity in the field of sexuality was mapped, which allowed for an identification of gaps in the field of Critical Sexuality Studies, sexuality social science research, and advanced sexuality training.

The results of the audit are available from www.sexualitystudies.net

Pedagogic approach

This short course is designed to maximise student participation and active learning. At the first CWG meeting, held in Perth, Australia, March 2008, it was agreed that the course should offer:

- Opportunities for participants to undertake personal reflection on and examination of attitudes and experiences (in recognition of the fact that sexuality is an emotionally complex arena)
- Active teaching, i.e. interaction among participants
- Use of mixed methods to meet different learning styles among participants
- Use of socially contextual materials for theorisation e.g. films, case studies

* For a more in-depth background, read the ‘Advancing Sexuality Studies Short Course: A Short History’ document.

- Opportunities to analyse existing research or examine previous experience of involvement in research

The overall pedagogic ethos was summed up as ‘Learning by (guided) doing’.

Some advice: tread carefully

Sexuality is an exciting, fascinating and *fraught* area of study in most cultures and societies in the world. Facilitators are gently reminded to:

- Take the ‘temperature’ constantly within the group. Be alert to those moments when and emotions rise lively discussion can tip over into heated debate.
- Ensure that everyone is aware that the course is not trying to say ‘you must do, think or behave like this’. Rather, the aim is to stimulate participants to think more critically on issues related to sexuality and to question issues, opinions or values that they (or others) may take for granted.
- Encourage participants to strive for respectful debate at all times. It may be useful to set ground rules right from the beginning.

Participants should be reminded that they are required to work critically with advanced sexuality theory and the material they encounter. The Critical Sexuality Studies field, by its very nature, requires those who work within it to be willing to discuss and think about sexually explicit material, and develop some degree of critical distance from concepts or sexual behaviours that they personally may dislike or find morally dubious.

Using the Short Course

The complete short course contains a set of modules and an introductory session. Each module is designed for use either as a stand-alone module, as part of the full short course or for incorporation into other courses. Before starting to run this course or selecting modules for use on their own or in relation to other syllabi, there are two important preparatory activities to undertake. The first activity is the Pre-course Contextual Scoping Study (PCSS). The second activity is to connect your efforts to the ongoing development of Critical Sexuality Studies as a field of scholarly inquiry by connecting to the growing network of scholars in the field through IASSCS.

Undertaking the Pre-course Contextual Scoping Study

Before a course is run, it is important that any potential facilitators undertake a PCSS. A format for the PCSS is included in the Course Preparation Documentation folder. This format guides facilitators through a process of identifying and utilising local resources and local sexuality issues, as well as identifying potential participants, collaborators and host institutions.

The PCSS is crucial for the course to be truly responsive to context, to stimulate thinking about the local as well as the global, and for it not to impose one world view of sexuality.

Selection of the most suitable modules to run in any given location will also depend on the findings of the PCSS (in general, it is unlikely that all modules will be run in each short course location). It remains important to undertake a PCSS even where only one or two short course modules are used as part of other courses, in order to incorporate local readings and issues within the modules selected.

Building a Critical Sexuality Studies scholars network

Part of the purpose in developing this course is to build Critical Sexuality Studies as a field of scholarly inquiry in different countries, regions, and internationally. One of the outcomes of the PCSS described above is the identification of potential collaborators and participants (with their institutions). It will be useful to try and

connect those identified while preparing and running this course with IASSCS, its activities and its online resources. This will help your participants to make the most of their training on this course and encourage them to continue pursuing this field of scholarship.

See: <http://www.iasscs.org/>

Using the modules

As a rule, each module folder contains:

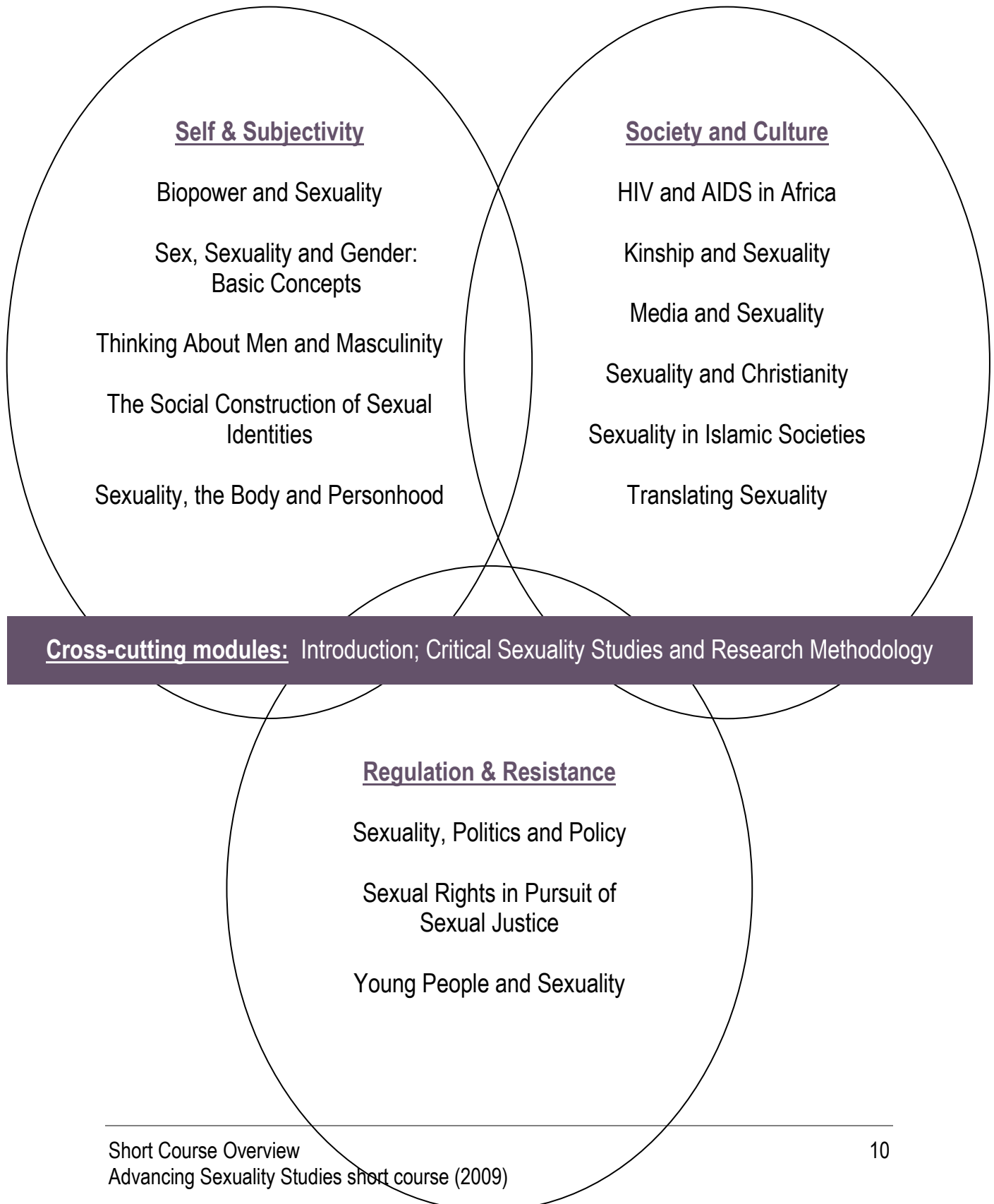
- Facilitator Notes
 - *Including module overview, schedule, course aims, learning objectives, details of module materials provided and materials required, lectures (as appropriate), instructions for module delivery, a full module bibliography, and a list of further reading*
- A PowerPoint presentation
 - *Clearly linked to the Facilitator Notes*
- A Module Outline for Participants
 - *Including module overview, aims, learning objectives, requirements for pre-module work (e.g. pre-readings), instructions for materials that participants should bring to the training (where applicable), a full module bibliography, and a list of further reading*

Where required, additional resources such as handouts or activity instructions to participants will also be provided in a module sub-folder called Resources.

The PowerPoint presentations can also be used as handouts, should the course be run in situations where electricity or other resources are scarce.

Possible module groupings

While the course is designed so that any of the modules can be used independently, there are clear connections between some modules. The following broad categorisations may be useful:



Module abstracts (in alphabetical order after the Introduction module)

NB: All timings exclude tea, coffee or lunch breaks.

Introduction (about 2 hrs)

This module is intended to provide participants with an overview of Advancing Sexuality Studies: A short course on sexuality theory and research methodologies. A brief background will be provided, along with a summary of an audit of sexuality studies undertaken as part of the short course development process. The short course team recommends that this Introduction module be used where two or more modules are being delivered together, as a way of establishing the framework in which the modules sit.

Biopower and Sexuality (about 4.5 hours)

Based on the work of Michel Foucault, the interrelated concepts of ‘biopower’, ‘governmentality’ and ‘technologies of the self’ have been used to shape sexualities research and to investigate health education practice. Indeed, many of the prevailing concerns in HIV and sexual and reproductive health can be conceptualised as ‘biopolitical’—thereby expanding the conceptual tools that can be used to generate research questions and encourage consideration of new forms of practice. Using examples from research and health education, this module introduces these concepts and enables participants to explore how they may be applied.

Critical Sexuality Studies and Research Methodology (about 6.5 hrs)

This module is designed to provide participants with an overview of the key issues associated with conducting research in Critical Sexuality Studies, including the ethical, social, and political complexities of studying sexuality, and the relationship between epistemology, methodology and method.

In addition, the module will provide students with the opportunity to undertake a research design case study, starting from identification of key issue to be researched

through to development of a dissemination plan. Throughout, students will have the opportunity to reflect upon and share their own experiences of research, while learning more specific detail about the relationship between Critical Sexuality Studies and research methodology.

HIV and AIDS in Africa

Sexuality in Africa is complex and the AIDS epidemics in Africa have highlighted tensions and fault lines in how sexuality has been understood. This module will set the scene for how HIV and AIDS in Africa has been viewed, understood, and responded to, from inside and outside Africa, creating a context for understanding how debates and issues around sexuality have been conceived and acted upon.

Kinship and Sexuality (about 7.5 hrs)

In many cultures, kinship and sexuality are perceived as intimately interconnected issues. Dominant sexual moralities often frame heterosexual relations within the union of marriage as the only ‘natural’ basis for family formation. There are currently a number of contemporary social and technological challenges to traditional sexual moralities and kinship practices. This module engages participants in questioning the ‘natural’ basis to understandings of kinship and explores how best to support innovative kinship practices from a Critical Sexuality Studies perspective.

Media and Sexuality (about 7.5 hrs)

This module draws on contemporary theoretical work from the fields of media and cultural studies to consider the questions of *who* uses media, and *how* and *why* they use it. Its focus is on the variety of ways that media can be used to *make sense* of sex, sexuality and sexual health. It is also designed to introduce researchers and practitioners from a range of disciplines to the practice of textual analysis as a research methodology.

Module readings and exercises will be used to promote a process of critical reflection, in which participants will explore the ways that media texts can be used in different

contexts: to shape opinions or behaviours, to entertain, to distract, to form identities, or to build communities. Participants will be invited to reflect on the ways that they use and enjoy media, and the ways that their own interactions with the media may (or may not) actively involve negotiation of values, attitudes and/or sense of identity.

Sex, Sexuality and Gender: Basic Concepts (6.5 hrs)

What does it mean to be a 'woman' or a 'man' and how can we tell the difference? What does it mean to speak of 'sex', 'sexuality' and 'gender', and how do these concepts interrelate? This module explores the social relationship between sex, sexuality and gender. Drawing on a range of theoretical approaches from sociology, feminism and queer theory, the module argues that it is impossible to understand any one of these three terms without reference to the other two.

The module describes in a critical fashion the ways in which hierarchies of sex, sexuality and gender are implicated in all areas of social life. In both Western and non-Western societies, what a woman and a man *should* be has relied on a narrow understanding of sex, gender and sexuality and *the relationship between* these three. This understanding is reproduced, reinforced and enforced by a range of social institutions, from the state to religious organisations and the media, and has been used to marginalise alternative gender and sexual identities.

The material in this module provides a foundation for other modules that look at how hierarchies of sex, sexuality and gender intersect with other social differences including race, socio-economic status, ethnicity and location.

Sexuality and Christianity (about 6 hrs)

The purpose of this module is to identify key themes that inform Christian thought, belief and practice about sexuality. This module provides participants with the opportunity to critique the application of these elements and to consider other factors that influence the way in which Christian churches are engaging with contemporary issues that centre upon sexuality. The module also offers the opportunity for

considering ways to engage positively with Christian communities on contemporary sexuality issues.

Sexuality in Islamic Societies (about 6.5 hrs)

This module is intended to provide all participants with an insight into the dynamic relationship between Islam and sexuality. For non-Muslim participants who have little or no knowledge of Islam, this module will disrupt false stereotypes about Muslims and their sexuality. For Muslim participants, this module will open up a dialogue that may not always be possible in their everyday lives. Some participants may find this challenging, others may find this liberating. It is hopeful, however, that by exploring Islam and sexuality in cross-cultural perspectives both Muslim and non-Muslim students will deepen their knowledge and understanding of how Islam and sexuality are negotiated in multiple contexts.

Sexuality, Politics and Policy (about 5 hrs)

This module looks at how the politics of sexuality is reflected in policy and its application, at both a national and international level. It outlines a conceptual framework for understanding policy that is related to sexuality, and draws on a number of examples of how policy is formed, enforced, debated, influenced and changed. It also looks at how sexuality is used as an issue for other political reasons.

The module is grounded with a set of readings that explore the different ways and levels at which policy functions in relation to sexuality. It includes some lecture time, but is predominantly based on group work—where students will be invited to reflect on a range of topical issues and engage in debates around these. The purpose of this is to increase understanding of the different views and ‘sides’ of debates around sexuality and policy, but also to allow you to develop your own ideas about these issues.

Sexuality, the Body and Personhood (about 7 hrs)

Sex and sexuality have long been assumed to be inextricably linked with the physical and social body. Notions of the body and personhood are therefore endowed with the ability either to constrain or to broaden notions of sexuality. This module is designed to introduce participants to the ways in which understandings of the body and personhood, as socially constructed, intersect with understandings and experiences of sexuality.

Sexual Rights in Pursuit of Sexual Justice (about 6.5 hrs)

This module offers a critical overview of sexual rights and examines how sexual rights are currently understood, discussed and used. Questions are raised on whether sexual rights are sufficient to achieve sexual justice and whether the use of rights-based discourses have unintended consequences. What are the best strategies for using a rights-based discourse while avoiding negative consequences?

The Social Construction of Sexual Identities (about 6 hrs)

This module introduces participants to critical perspectives on sexual identity from a social constructionist perspective. In particular, these approaches critique common assumptions about 'natural', trans-historical or universal sexuality and identify a range of factors at work in the constitution of sexual subjectivities in social and cultural context. The module encourages participants to analyse these factors particularly in relation to processes associated with globalisation.

Thinking About Men and Masculinity (about 4.5 hrs)

This module explores contemporary sociological theory on masculinity and sexuality, and invites participants to reflect on sexual issues related to men in their own social and professional contexts in terms of those ideas.

Translating Sexuality

(about 4 hrs)

This module extends an understanding of ‘translation’ beyond word-for-word replacement (the traditional understanding) and into consideration of all acts of communicative intent as acts of translation, in which meaning can shift focus or change entirely. How are meanings of ‘sex’ or ‘sexuality’ transmitted, and what meanings may get lost, or be added, in the process of translation? How does the dominance of English as a lingua franca of sexuality studies affect pre-existing understandings of sexual desire, sexual practice or sexual identities?

Young People and Sexuality

(about 7.5 hrs)

Young people’s sexualities have often been a focus for concern among professionals, parents, carers and other adults. This module takes as its starting point the position that understandings of concepts such as ‘sexuality’ and ‘youth’ are socially and culturally constructed. The module examines the relationships between this construction of meaning and the ways in which we understand and respond to sexuality and young people. Issues of regulation and resistance will also be examined, as will implications for practice.