

**Module Outline for Course Participants**

**The Social Construction of Sexual Identities**

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**course on sexuality theory and research methodologies'**. The short course was developed by the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, Melbourne,

Australia, *and* the International Association for the Study of Sexuality, Culture and Society.

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This module was created by Dr Paul Boyce and Dr Clare Hemmings and adapted by the Advancing Sexuality Studies short course team at the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia.

**Abstract**

This module introduces participants to contextualize the 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. More specifically the module encourages participants to analyse these factors particularly in relation to the development of Caribbean sexual identity as a consequence of colonialism and the current modern context. carnival and the carnivalesque will be utilized as a main example for this analysis.

**Module aims:**

• To introduce participants to social constructionist understandings of sexual

identity from anthropology, history and contemporary sociology

• To understand the origins/basis of Caribbean sexual identity.

• To bring together perspectives on culture and sexuality by exploring the ways in

which Caribbean sexuality is described.

**Participants will:**

• Develop a critical understanding of sexual identity as socially constructed in

relations of discourse and power

• Be able to assess the development of a Caribbean sexuality based on the development of the region’s sexual cultures.

• Examine connections between culture and sexuality through material culture,

especially through exploring the carnivalesque as an idea through which modern Caribbean sexual identity is represented and scripted.

**Pre-reading**

Chevannes, Barry. 2002. Gender and Adult Sexuality. In *Gendered Realities: Essays in Caribbean Feminist Thought*, edited by P. Mohammed. Kingston: University of the West Indies Press.

Kempadoo, Kamala. 2004. *Sexing the Caribbean. Gender, Race and Sexual Labor*. Oxon: Routledge. Chap 2:Pp15-51.

Liverpool, Hollis 2001 Rituals of Power and Rebellion: The Carnival Tradition in Trinidad and Tobago 1763-1962. Research Associates Ltd. Chicago. Pp 127- 131

**Optional pre-reading (in suggested order)**

Kempadoo, Kamala. 2003. Theorizing Sexual Relations in the Caribbean: Prostitution and the Problem of the "Exotic". In *Confronting Power, Theorizing Gender. Interdisciplinary Perspectives in the Caribbean*, edited by E. Barriteau. Kingston: University of the West Indies Press.pp 159-187

Allen, Caroline F. 1998. Caribbean Bodies: Representation and Practise. In *Caribbean Portraits. Essays on Gender Ideologies and Identities*, edited by C. Barrow. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers.

**Material required**

In preparation for the course, participants are asked to carefully study the pictures of the carnival revelers from the Caribbean depicted below. Be prepared to discuss these pictures and their context.

**[](http://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&docid=QszsuPu0VNsAGM&tbnid=xOsFvJN9Q2gQQM:&ved=0CAUQjRw&url=http://www.islandmix.com/backchat/f6/carnival-passa-passa-204305/&ei=1R-yUbSyJNGl4AOFmIDABw&bvm=bv.47534661,d.dmg&psig=AFQjCNGvMII5YqRRGqAaA1-f6HzK2bCzIw&ust=1370714372320942)**



Sources: Trinidad Carnival 2011. Shutter Effex. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=44GsNpo6h2c

& Passa Passa in Jamaica http://www.islandmix.com/backchat/f6/carnival-passa-passa-204305

**Overview of module:**

This module will encourage discussion on the basis of the Social Construction of Caribbean Sexual Identities. Participants will be encouraged to utilize both lecture and small group participation, utilizing reflective learning to understand the peculiar context of the Caribbean. In particular the participants will appreciate the point that the region’s colonial history influenced many aspects of its socialization including its sexual socialization. As a result of this history, indigenous forms of sexual identities emerged.

Session 1. Sexual identities and social constructionism

This session asks participants to identify the social basis to sexual identities in their own

social contexts. It includes a lecture providing an introduction to anthropological,

historical, and contemporary sociological approaches to sexual identity as a regulatory

feature of modern social life and the implications of this for sexual experience and subjectivity.

Session 2. The development of Caribbean Sexual identities

This session discusses the growth of a Caribbean sexual identity and questions the nature of the gendered dichotomy. It includes a lecture that interrogates the historical and social contexts in which a Caribbean identity(ies) developed following colonialism and to the present day. Students will be challenged to examine the extent to which the Caribbean “norm” followed on from contemporary mainstream sociological approaches.

Session 3. The Carnivalesque and the social construction of Caribbean sexualities

In groups, participants will evaluate how sexuality in the Caribbean is socially constructed. This evaluation will be done in the context of the region’s Carnival and other performative moments, which are some of the popular reference points for the expression of national or regional sexual identities.

Session 4. Caribbean Sexual Construction: “coming of age”

In this session participants will analyse the manner in which Caribbean sexualities can be understood as a social continuity of Victorian and Judeo-Christian norms and the extent to which contemporary global sexualities have impacted “Carnival culture”.

Conclusion:

At the end of this module students will realize that while the historical development of the Caribbean influenced its sexual development from the fifteenth through to the twentieth centuries, Caribbean ideas of sexuality also affected and, in many cases, dominated the imposed western Judeo Christian norms. The effects of multi ethnic societies (created as a result of the colonial legacy of 17th Century enslavement and 18th Century indentureship) not only affected accepted notions of constructionists sexual development but affected also the plural make up of the society and the divergent norms adopted. Ultimately the “Carnivalisque” will be viewed as the ultimate indigenous (sexual) creation, which ironically, in its expression challenges even the heterosexual ‘norm’.

**Further reading (includes lecture bibliography)**

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