



Module Outline for Course Participants

Biopower and Sexuality

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'Introduction to Advancing Sexuality Studies: A short 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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Abstract

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.

Module aims

- To introduce participants to the concepts of biopower, governmentality and technologies of the self
- To encourage participants to apply these concepts in analysis of interview text and sexual health promotion material
- To encourage participants to critically reflect upon how these concepts can generate new questions and forms of inquiry in HIV care and sexual and reproductive health

Participants will:

- Examine sexual and reproductive health and HIV care as forms of governmentality
- Discuss the implications of self-regulation in sexual and reproductive health and HIV care
- Apply Foucauldian approaches to the analysis of sexuality and educational interventions
- Explore the biopolitical dimensions of sexual and reproductive health and HIV care

Required pre-reading

- Gutting, G. (2005) Modern sex. In *Foucault: A Very Short Introduction* Oxford, Oxford University Press, p 91-100.
- Rose, N. (2001) The politics of life itself, *Theory, Culture and Society*, 18(6), 1-30.
- Shoveller, J.A. & Johnson, J.J. (2006) Risky groups, risky behaviour, and risky persons: dominating discourses on youth sexual health, *Critical Public Health*, 16(1), 47-60.

Overview

Introduction

Participants will be given a brief description of the module approach, schedule, and aims.

Session 1. Biopower, governmentality and technologies of the self

This session introduces participants to the key concepts informing the module and encourages them to apply these concepts to aspects of their own experience with public and sexual health messages.

Session 2. Self-care and technologies of the self

In this session participants are asked to work in pairs to analyse extracts of interview transcripts from the book *HIV in South Africa: Talking about the Big Thing* using a discourse analysis approach informed by the concept of technologies of the self.

Session 3. Sexual health education materials and governmentality

Session 3 requires participants to analyse a sexual health poster from the United Kingdom from a governmentality perspective. Participants are then asked to discuss how governmentality functions in sexual health education, and how it might fail in its intentions.

Concluding activity

Participants are invited to identify a key learning point of the module, and to reflect upon how these ideas might inform their own research or professional practice.

Further reading

(includes lecture bibliography)

- Blackwood, E. (2007) Regulation of sexuality in Indonesian discourse: normative gender, criminal law and shifting strategies of control, *Culture, Health and Sexuality*, 9(3), 293-307.
- Foucault, M. (1978) *The History of Sexuality. Volume One: An Introduction*. Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- Foucault, M. (1982 [1977]) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- Foucault, M. (1988) Technologies of the self. In L. Martin, H. Gutman & P. Hutton (Eds) *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* Amherst, University of Massachusetts Press.
- Foucault, M. (1991) The repressive hypothesis. In P. Rabinow (Ed) *The Foucault Reader* London, Penguin, p 301-329.
- Gutting, G. (2005) Modern sex. In *Foucault: A Very Short Introduction* Oxford, Oxford University Press, p 91-100.
- Halperin, D. (2007) What do gay men want? In *What Do Gay Men Want? An Essay on Sex, Risk, and Subjectivity* Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, p 1-10.
- Macleod, C. (2001) Teenage motherhood and the regulation of mothering in the scientific literature: the South African example, *Feminism & Psychology*, 11(4), 493-510.
- McNay, L. (2003) Foucault: aesthetics and ethics. In J. Weeks, J. Holland & M. Waites (Eds) *Sexualities and Society: A Reader* Cambridge, Polity, p 245-255.
- Persson, A. & Newman, C. (2008) Making monsters: heterosexuality, crime and race in recent Western media coverage of HIV, *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 30(4), 632-646.
- Pugsley, P. (2007) Sex and the city-state: a study of sexual discourse in Singaporean women's magazines, *Asian Journal of Communication*, 17(3), 231-245.
- Race, K. (2001) The undetectable crisis: changing technologies of risk, *Sexualities*, 4(2), 167-189.
- Race, K. (2007) Engaging in a culture of barebacking: gay men and the risk of HIV prevention. In K. Hannah-Moffat & P. O'Malley (Eds) *Gendered Risks* London, Routledge, p 99-126.
- Richey, L. (2004) Construction, control and family planning in Tanzania: some bodies the same and some bodies different, *Feminist Review*, 78, 56-79.
- Rose, N. (2007a) Biological citizens. In *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century* Princeton, Princeton University Press, p 131-154.
- Rose, N. (2007b) *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- Shoveller, J.A. & Johnson, J.J. (2006) Risky groups, risky behaviour, and risky persons: dominating discourses on youth sexual health, *Critical Public Health*, 16(1), 47-60.
- Squire, C. (2007) *HIV in South Africa: Talking About the Big Thing*. London, Routledge.
- Wilbraham, L. (2008) Parental communication with children about sex in the HIV/Aids epidemic in South Africa: gendered, raced, classed and cultural appropriations of *Lovelines*, *African Journal of AIDS Research*, 7(1), 95-109.

Wilbraham, L. (2009) Manufacturing willingness: parents and young people talking about sex in the HIV/Aids epidemic in South Africa, *South African Journal of Psychology*, 39(1), 59-74.