



Module Outline for Course Participants

Sexuality in Islamic Societies

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This module was developed as part of '**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.

Funded by the Ford Foundation

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This module was created by Dr Linda Rae Bennett 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 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.

Module aims

- To encourage students to challenge popular myths and negative attitudes towards sexuality in Islamic societies,
- To provide an overview of the social regulation of sexuality in Islamic societies,
- To take into account historical, cultural and textual influences.

Participants will:

- Engage with a range of issues that feature in contemporary debates on Islam and sexuality
- Undertake cross-cultural comparisons in relation to these issues and develop their critical thinking skills in relation to this topic
- Engage in active learning through participation in module activities

Pre-reading

- Bennett, L. R. (2005) 'Islam as a medium for promoting reproductive rights', in *Women, Islam and Modernity: Single Women, Sexuality and Reproductive Health in Contemporary Indonesia*. London/ New York: Routledge/Curzon. Chapter 6, pp. 145-150.
- Boellstorff, T. (2005) Between religion and desire: being Muslim and gay in Indonesia, *American Anthropologist*, 107, 575-585.
- Othman, N. (2000) Sexuality and Gender Rights: A Sociological Perspective. IN Anwar, Z. & Abdullah, R. (Eds.) *Islam, Reproductive Health and Women's Rights*. Kuala Lumpur, Sisters in Islam. (Read only pages 86-105)

Overview of module

Introduction

Participants will be given a brief description of the module approach, schedule, and aims. Anticipated participant outcomes will also be described, as will the module parameters.

Session 1. Challenging stereotypes

This session is built around a quiz, with built-in discussion points. After discussing their own responses to each quiz question, participants will be provided with a response from Dr Bennett.

Session 2. The social regulation of sexuality in Islamic societies

This session will begin with a review of the pre-readings, then move into a structured question and answer session that will provide participants with the opportunity both to examine their own understandings and to draw on broader theoretical work.

Session 3. Engaging in research and debate on sexuality within Islamic societies

Participants will be asked to choose between two optional activities in this session. The first is a debate, on one of five key topics related to Islam and sexuality; the second is development of guidelines for ethical research with and within Islamic societies.

Conclusion

Module themes and participant outputs are pulled together.

Further reading

(including lecture bibliography)

- Bennett, L. R. (2005) *Women, Islam and Modernity: Single Women, Sexuality and Reproductive Health in Contemporary Indonesia*. London, Routledge Curzon.
- Blackwood, E. (2006) Sexualities: Transexualities. In Joseph, S. (Ed.) *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures: Family, Body, Sexuality and Health*. Leiden, Brill.
- Boellstorff, T. (2005) *The Gay Archipelago: Sexuality and Nation in Indonesia*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- Davies, S. G. (2007) *Challenging Gender Norms: Five Genders Among Bugis in Indonesia*. Auckland, Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Jamal, A. (2001) The story of Lut and the Quran's perception of the morality of same-sex sexuality, *Journal of Homosexuality*, 41, 1-88.
- Kugle, S. (2003) Sexuality, Diversity and Ethics in the Agenda of Progressive Muslims. In Safi, O. (Ed.) *Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender and Pluralism*. Oxford, Oneworld Publications.
- Kugle, S. (2010) *Homosexuality in Islam: Critical Reflection on Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Muslims*. Oxford, Oneworld Publications.
- Mernissi, F. (1985) *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society*. London, Al Saqi Books.
- Nyangweso Wangila, M. (2007) *Female Circumcision: The Interplay of Religion, Culture, and Gender in Kenya*. New York, Orbis Books.
- Wieringa, S. (1999) Desiring Bodies or Defiant Cultures: Butch-Femme Lesbians in Jakarta and Lima. In Blackwood, E. & Wieringa, S. (Eds.) *Female Desires: Same-Sex Relations and Transgender Practices Across Cultures*. New York, Columbia University Press.
- World Health Organization (1997) *Communicating Family Planning in Reproductive Health: Key Messages for Communicators*. Geneva, WHO.
- Yip, A. K. & Khalid, A. (2010) Looking for Allah: Spiritual Quests of Queer Muslims. In Munt, S. R. & Yip, A. K. (Eds.) *Queer Spiritual Spaces: Sexuality and Sacred Places*. Surrey, Ashgate Publishing.

Online resource

The Safra Project: a resource project working on issues relating to lesbian, bisexual and/or transgender women who identify as Muslim religiously and/or culturally.

<http://www.safraproject.org/aboutus.htm>