

CFP: Sex and the Academy

22-23 February 2016, Ghent University, Belgium

A two-day workshop of the
International Network for Sexual Ethics and Politics – INSEP

Hosted by CEVI – *Centre for Ethics and Value Inquiry*
Faculty of Arts and Philosophy
Ghent University, Blandijnberg 2
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<http://www.insep.ugent.be/sexandtheacademy/>

Earlier this year Laura Kipnis caused a controversy with her article on ‘sexual paranoia’ in the academy in which she commented on university policies regulating student-faculty sexual relationships. Some called her intervention a melodrama – melodramatic or not, ensuing events did take on epic proportions. She met with vehement opposition and was even under investigation from her own university. Discussions on social media quickly widened to encompass feminism/postfeminism controversies. *Sex in the academy* has always been a controversial issue – not only between faculty and students, but within the student population as well. Plenty are the studies documenting the alleged rise of a student hook-up culture and the highly sexualized liminal zone of student life.

Sex and the academy is not without controversies either. Researching and teaching sex has often generated heated debate. To name but a few examples: from Kinsey’s research and ‘marriage course’ in the forties and fifties; over the impact of the ‘second sexual revolution’ in the sixties and seventies; the rise of gender studies, women’s studies and feminist research, lesbian and gay studies and programs in the late seventies and eighties; the burgeoning of queer & LGBTI studies in the nineties; to more recent controversies concerning agency, choice and empowerment in the feminism/postfeminism debates, porn studies and work on sex work/prostitution/trafficking – the ‘powers of desire’ and the sexual politics of higher education have always caused tensions, controversies and opportunities.

Higher education is shaped by wider social and cultural sexual politics and dynamics. The masculine and gendered character of the institution, e.g., is still holding back the career development of women in academia. More recently, the neoliberalisation of higher education has had an enduring impact on class, gender and sexuality structurings, subjectivities and normativities in academia.

Higher education has often played a crucial role in shaping sexual politics as well. By their very nature universities and colleges are highly sexualized and gendered places and spaces. Teaching, according to some, has an intimate link with desire and generates tensions and intimacies between teachers and students. The curriculum is not detached from the wider social context and is as such gendered and sexualized. Higher education also provides a liminal zone and timeframe which enables young people to discover, develop and experiment with sexual relationships, identities and repertoires. As places of scholarship and research, universities shape knowledges and future research and pedagogical agendas.

In this two-day workshop we would like to bring together researchers, teachers and students to reflect on the sexual politics of higher education. It is a first instalment of a series of meetings in which the wide array of issues related to the sexualized and gendered nature of higher education will be explored.

We invite proposals for papers and pre-organized panels addressing historical and contemporary aspects of the following themes:

HE as Gendered and Sexualized Institutions

- Political/Sexual/Gender correctness on campus, in teaching and research
- Sexual harassment and assault - rape & date/acquaintance-rape
- Sexual correctness, harassment and assault regulations and policies
- Student reproductive and sexual health issues and promotion, facilities & access
- Campus tolerance, solidarity & sexual identity and orientation
- Cultural and sexual diversities
- HE institutions as loci and agents of change – sexual revolutions & backlashes
- Women, careers and the academy - gender mainstreaming policies & challenges
- HE and masculinity
- The sexual politics of the neoliberal university

Researching & Teaching Sexuality

- Researching and teaching sexuality studies & sexuality-related topics
- Gendered curricula & research agendas
- HE as a critical/disciplinary space and regime
- Feminist, queer and critical pedagogies
- Sexual identities, orientations and academic careers
- Libraries, erotica & pornography
- Researching student sexualities
- Research ethics and sexuality research
- Women's, feminist and (post)gender studies and their relation with sexuality studies
- Feminism(s)/Postfeminism(s) and the agency & empowerment debates in HE
- The place of queer studies in HE
- Sexology and its place in HE
- Freedom of speech, academic freedom and censorship
- The erotics of teaching and education

Student Sexual Relations and Explorations in HE

- Liminality - student life as a liminal zone of sexual opportunities, discovery & experimentation
- Student-Faculty Sexual Relations - Authority & Power (im)balances; consent, choice, responsibilities, vulnerabilities & harm
- The sexual imperative and peer conformity pressures
- Hook-up Culture, Friends with benefits & Casual Sex
- Technologies of dating & sexualised social media
- Hetero & homonormativities - Inclusions and exclusions
- Student gender identities, ambiguities and sexual orientations
- Sexual reputations and double standards
- (International) Student mobility: opportunities and challenges
- Student unions as sexualised and/or sexuality/identity-based organisations
- Student events - parties, upper dare's, ...
- Student sex work
- Sexual activism & feminist mobilisation on and off campus

Submission & Timeline

Abstracts for presentations (300 words) or for panels of up to three speakers (please submit a 500-600 overview and set of abstracts) should reach us by 15 November 2015 at the latest, with notification of acceptance 22 November 2015. To facilitate funding applications you can submit an abstract in advance of the regular deadline – our turnaround time for refereeing in this case is 10 days and we can provide documentation where it is required to facilitate funding.

Please send abstracts to: insep.network@gmail.com

The fee for the two-day workshop is 100 Euro. A concessionary rate of 50 Euro is available to students and postgraduates.

INSEP publishes a journal and a book series with Barbara Budrich Publishers. We would anticipate commissioning publications from the conference and, dependent on quality and coherence, may publish a collection based on themes emerging from the conference. INSEP also welcomes submissions to the journal and proposals to the Book Series.

For more info on INSEP & the *Sex and the Academy* initiative please visit:

Sex and the Academy: <http://www.insep.ugent.be/sexandtheacademy/>

INSEP – <http://www.insep.ugent.be/>

Journal INSEP – <http://budrich-journals.de/index.php/insep>

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