

Gender across the World: Transnational Sexualities

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Course Hours: Saturday 2:30 p.m. - 5:15 p.m.

This course examines the politics of sexualities within a transnational frame of analysis and explores the process of “border-crossings” through critical engagements of normative and non-normative sexualities. Using cross-cultural research on sexuality studies, the course will address these key questions: as bodies move across national, cultural, racial, and ideological borders, how is sexuality redefined, named, and leveraged for change? What factors allow for new formations and understandings of sexuality to emerge within an increasingly globalized world? How do social forces such as nationalism, citizenship, global neoliberalism, settler colonialism, and mass media shape and produce desires, sexual identities, sexual labor, sexual practices, bodies and genders? Students will learn key concepts used in discussions of transnational sexuality studies to expand their understanding of intersectional analysis. Topics for study include: queer and LGBTQ+ organizing; expression of sexual identities, desires, and practices across nation-state borders; queer migration and labor flows; transnational cultural industries; sex trafficking and tourism; and settler colonialism, among others.

Course Objectives

After taking this course, students will be able to:

1. Utilize factual knowledge (terminology, classifications, methods, and trends) in analysis of the origins and shaping influence of human diversity and issues of equality in this world.
2. Build a strong foundation for intersectional analysis (i.e., sexuality, race, gender, culture, etc.) of social inequalities and the complexities and responsibilities of actively participating in a diverse, multiethnic, multilingual world community.
3. Establish an awareness of how individual and collective decision making and civic responsibilities often generate ethical dilemmas, conflicts, and trade-offs that must be thoughtfully evaluated, weighed, and resolved.
4. Develop research and writing skills that incorporate primary and secondary source materials in the field of sexuality studies in a global context.
5. Apply course materials to improve critical thinking and problem solving, particularly in relation to the persistent issues of social injustice, civic engagement, and resistance.
6. Demonstrate an understanding of how local features of urban or rural communities, ethnicities, nations and regions are often linked to global trends, tendencies, and characteristics that often mutually shape one another.

Required Readings:

Gary L. Atkins. 2012. *Imaging Gay Paradise: Bali, Bangkok, and Cyber-Singapore*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.

Everett Yuehong Zhang. 2015. *The Impotence Epidemic: Men's Medicine and Sexual Desire in Contemporary China*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Alvin Wong. 2025. *Unruly Comparison: Queerness, Hong Kong, and the Sinophone*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Course Requirements

Short Posts (2 x 500 words)

One of the principal ways we will listen to and talk to each other in this class is through engaged responses to the readings. You may focus on one article more than others (but demonstrating some knowledge of the set of texts will be important). Comparison across the semester's readings is highly encouraged. You are welcome to focus on one issue across the articles/book, or a number of issues in one article/book, or indeed a very close reading of a particular passage. Please make sure that you provide a sense of the material you are addressing through substantive summary or paraphrase instead of just quotation and clearly highlight an overarching argument rather than a series of scattered observations. Please post an entry of around 500 words (keeping to the length is important, though a few words more or less are okay) on the readings by 11:00 pm on Fridays and please read others' posts by class time. You should submit TWO posts during the semester.

Presentations (2)

Careful reading of the texts and informed participation in seminar meetings is required. Because the class meets once a week, students are expected to come to class having read the assigned materials, ready to actively participate in discussion about the materials with questions, thoughts, and ideas. Students should also be prepared to discuss the presentation questions as described below.

Each student needs to choose two readings and lead the class discussions for the chosen weeks. In your presentation, you should:

1. Identify the historical, political, social context and background for the author(s) and texts under discussion.
2. Outline the main argument or concepts in the text, and the evidence or (inter)disciplinary framework used to make the argument.
3. Offer your opinion about how the concepts and ideas contradict or align with other authors we've read.

4. Look up any concepts you're unfamiliar with and offer definitions.

A 2–3-page handout responding to these requirements should be prepared in advance and sent to the class. You should include 3 written questions that interrogate the assigned readings, consider the implications of the readings in relation to the interests of the course (as stated in the Course Description), and should be used to spark class discussions. You will also be expected to answer questions posed by others.

Final Project

The final project is a 20-minute group presentation on a topic that demonstrates the relationships between bodies and power, broadly defined. You will do this by identifying a theme from the readings and using it to analyze your topic. Possible topics can include issues of sex, gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity, social class and inequality, and many others. You will be evaluated on how well you connect the theoretical material to concrete examples from your social world. In addition to the intellectual content, you will also be evaluated on your presentation skills. This includes how well your group communicates the key points of your analysis and how well your group handles 10 minutes of Q&A following the presentation.

Assessment

Your grade will be assessed according to your engagement with the class materials, as evidenced in both your written work and class participation. You will be evaluated on your ability to express your ideas and analysis in a cogent and well-structured manner, and creatively explore the theories and methodologies introduced in this course.

Generally, performance that exceeds or falls short of expectations within a grade category will receive a modification of + / - to the overall letter grade.

Participation	20%
Short Posts (2)	20%
Presentation (2)	20%
Final Project	40%

- A** Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes
- B** Good performance on all learning outcomes
- C** Satisfactory performance on learning outcomes
- D** Non-satisfactory performance on learning outcomes
- F** Failure to complete assessment requirements, including plagiarism

Academic Honesty

The Chinese University of Hong Kong places very high importance on honesty in academic work submitted by students and adopts a policy of zero tolerance on cheating and plagiarism. Any related offence will lead to disciplinary action including termination of studies at the University. For a description of CUHK's policy on academic honesty, view the following website: [http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng_htm_files_\(2013-14\)/index_page2.htm](http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/Eng_htm_files_(2013-14)/index_page2.htm)

The Chinese University of Hong Kong community embraces diversity of age, background, beliefs, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, and other visible and non-visible categories. I welcome all students in this course and expect that all students contribute to a respectful, welcoming and inclusive environment. If you have any concerns about classroom climate, please come to me to share your concern.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools

For assignments and assessment tasks that count towards the final course grades, students are not allowed to submit work which is produced with the collaboration of or supported by the use of any generative AI tools.

Any breach of the regulations will be considered an act of academic dishonesty and will be handled according to the University's Procedures for Handling Cases of Academic Dishonesty.

Course Schedule

- 1. Jan. 10 Introduction: Transnational Approach to Sexualities**
 - Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan. 2001. "Global Identities: Theorizing Transnational Studies of Sexuality."

- 2. Jan. 17 What Is Sexuality Studies?**
 - Michel Foucault. 1979. *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1, Part 5: Right of Death and Power over Life.*

 - Recommended—Michel Foucault. 1979. *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1, Part 1-4.*

- 3. Jan. 24 Sexual Governmentality**
 - Afsaneh Najmabadi. 2014. *Professing Selves: Transsexuality and Same-Sex Desire in Contemporary Iran*, introduction and chapter 1
 - Kimberly Kay Hoang. 2014. *Flirting with Capital: Negotiating Perceptions of Pan-Asian Ascendancy and Western Decline in Global Sex Work.*

4. Jan. 31 **Revisiting Neoliberal China through Sexual Perspective**
- Everett Yuehong Zhang. 2015. *The Impotence Epidemic: Men's Medicine and Sexual Desire in Contemporary China*, introduction and part one.
5. Feb. 7 **Revisiting Neoliberal China through Sexual Perspective (continued)**
- Everett Yuehong Zhang. 2015. *The Impotence Epidemic: Men's Medicine and Sexual Desire in Contemporary China*, part two and conclusion.
6. Feb. 14 **Sexualized Encounters of Imperialism**
- Gary L. Atkins. 2012. *Imaging Gay Paradise: Bali, Bangkok, and Cyber-Singapore*, chapter 1-7.
7. Feb. 21 **Sexualities and Nationalism**
- Gary L. Atkins. 2012. *Imaging Gay Paradise: Bali, Bangkok, and Cyber-Singapore*, chapter 8-14.
8. Feb. 28 **Decolonizing Sexualities**
- Gary L. Atkins. 2012. *Imaging Gay Paradise: Bali, Bangkok, and Cyber-Singapore*, chapter 15-20.
- Recommended—Bobby Benedicto. 2014. *Under Bright Lights: Gay Manila and the Global Scene*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
9. Mar. 7 **Queer Eye for Post/colonial Hong Kong**
- Alvin Wong. 2025. *Unruly Comparison: Queerness, Hong Kong, and the Sinophone*, introduction, chapter 1, 2.
- Recommended—Alvin Wong. 2025. *Unruly Comparison: Queerness, Hong Kong, and the Sinophone*, chapter 3, 4, 5 and epilogue.
10. Mar. 14 **Sexualizing Transnational Asian Pop Culture**
- Charlie Yi Zhang. 2017. When Feminist Falls in Love with Queer: Dan Mei Culture as a Transnational Apparatus of Love. *Feminist Formations* 29 no.2: 121-146.
 - Wikanda Promkhuntong. 2025. The Pluralism of Thai Boys Love Industry: Auteur Migration, Fan Showrunners, Labor Vulnerability,

and Queer Potentiality. *Television & New Media*, 0(0).

<https://doi.org/10.1177/15274764251371585>

- Jamie J. Zhao. 2023. From ‘Kill This Love’ to ‘Cue Ji’s Love’: The Convergence of Queer, Feminist and Global TV Cultures in China. *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 45 no.2:155–173.

11. Mar. 21 Debating Sexual Trafficking

- Laura Agustín. 2005. Migrants in the Mistress’s House: Other Voices in the “Trafficking” Debate. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society* 12 no.1: 96-117.
- Rhacel Salzar Parreñas. 2006. Sex for Sale: Trafficked? Filipino Hostesses in Tokyo’s Nightlife Industry. *Yale JL & Feminism* 18: 145-178.

12. Mar. 28 Tourism, Sexuality and Travel

- M. Jacqui Alexander. 2001. Imperial Desire/Sexual Utopias: White Gay Capital and Transnational Tourism. *Talking Visions: Multicultural Feminism in a Transnational Age*: 281-305
- Jasbir Puar. 2002. Circuits of Queer Mobility: Tourism, Travel, and Globalization. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 8 no.1: 101-137.

13. Apr. 4 Qingming Festival

14. Apr. 11 Final Presentations (via Zoom)