

## Abstracts of Scheduled Sessions 2006

### **Labels, Categories, and Politics:**

#### **The Uses and Misuses of Sexual Labels and Identities**

For several decades now, activists on the street and in the academy have been wrestling with ways to articulate a sense of sexual self in a way which is both liberative and inclusive, and which spurs subjects to life-affirming action while recognizing the fluidity of sexual identities. Some of the categories and labels which many of us hold dear and which have been such a vital part of our struggles have turned out to be less liberative for other folk whose subject positions differ in terms of class, race, and national citizenships. In fact, recent scholarship from various national contexts has demonstrated that projects of liberation authored by United States activists and scholars, and based on their experience, turn out to have been a part of an aggressive economic imperialism. This panel will present work which, first, considers the words used to describe sexualities, in various national and cultural contexts, and how those labels are codified into categories of sexual identity. And second, the authors will move beyond their particular data sets consider the potential of those categories and labels to either restrict or facilitate liberative practice (conceived broadly).

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### **Direct Action Lunch Roundtable, GLBTQ Discourse, Text, and Actions:**

#### **What Is To Be Done?**

This lunchtime roundtable will focus on how GLBTQ-identified individuals, a marginalized and oppressed minority within many global social contexts, often attempt to project the most positive image possible, thus creating a vacuum for people who need help. Such help could be in many forms, including coming to terms with their sexuality, being public about their sexual orientation, or health, recovery, social, arts, and therapeutic services they might need. The facilitators of this panel will offer their own insights into this process of socialization through short presentations on their own work with the "ex-gay" movement, crystal methamphetamine addiction, and other topics. Looking carefully at the ways that direct action engages lavender language issues and makes use of language as an organizing tool. Questions for discussion by the group as a whole include what approaches (including, but not limited to, direct action and ethnographic methods) can be used to start addressing the social problems that GLBTQ-identified face in everyday urban, rural, and suburban life.

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### **LAVENDER SCREEN:**

#### **A SESSION DISCUSSING QUEER DESIRE IN MEDIA**

Continuing the discussion of queer media begun at Lav Lgs XII, we are seeking short films and written paper/presentations that will (1) examine how queer subjectivities, experiences and desire framed through visual media and/or (2) interrogate mainstream media through a queer lens. We invite papers and films (under 30 mins.) that examine visual language of film and video for queer expression, documentary works on queer populations and the ways in which visual media intersect with and

mutually influence queerness.

This session will include works by Michelle Carnes and Harjant Gill, who will also serve as two of the discussants following the screenings and presentations.

Please submit any media in 1/2" VHS NTSC or DVD format. Preference will be given to completed works, although fine-medium cut or shorter versions of films (longer than 30 mins.) may also be submitted for consideration. Please include with your submission any written information regarding the work and any available promotion materials.

Send written proposals for presentations to [harjantsg@aol.com](mailto:harjantsg@aol.com) . Send media materials to

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**About the session organizers:**

Harjant Gill, born and raised in India, is a film maker and doctoral student in anthropology at American University. His previous films include, "Some Reasons for Living", an ethnographic documentary exploring society's intolerance of transgender individuals, and "EVERYTHING", an autobiographical short about growing up Sikh and Queer. Both films played at numerous film festivals worldwide. His most recent film, "Mission Movie," a bilingual feature film exploring the diversity of life and relationships in the Mission district of SF was awarded "Best Feature" at the NY International Latino Film Festival this year.

Michele Carnes is a film maker and doctoral student in anthropology with a concentration in Race, Gender and Social Justice at American University. Her first film, History's Playground, is a documentary about her father's Civil War reenactor group, their community and camaraderie as they perform at national parks around the country. Delving into her personal world, screwdriver (her second film) is an intense documentary about the lasting effects of her surviving a violent attack by a stranger on a Chicago street in 2001 and her struggle over the decision of whether to take his life. Her third and current film coordinates with her doctoral dissertation and enters the clandestine world of secret collectives for African-American women who strip at African-American lesbian events in Washington DC. Michelle is a 2005 Carlos Cisneros Point Foundation Scholar and will be the first "Dr. Carnes" in her family.

Writer/director [Rose Troche](#) grew up in the Midwest suburbs as part of a large Puerto Rican family, which may be related to her knack for ensemble casts. After making short films and videos, she made her feature debut with the romantic comedy [Go Fish](#), which she co-produced and co-wrote with lead actress [Guinevere Turner](#). Shot in 16 mm black-and-white around the Chicago neighborhood of Wicker Park, the film premiered at Sundance and has become something of a lesbian cult hit. In 1998, she directed the British romantic comedy [Bedrooms & Hallways](#) about gay men in London. She focused on the heterosexual suburbs her 2001 feature [The Safety of Objects](#), an adaptation of several short stories by A.M. Homes starring [Glenn Close](#) and [Dermot Mulroney](#). Moving over to television, she directed an episode of [Six Feet Under](#) for HBO. Her latest project is a series about the lesbian

community in L.A. called The L Word, which premiered January 2004, on Showtime. ~ Andrea LeVasseur, All Movie Guide

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### **Cyberspace, Homophobic Discourse, and the Conservative Christian Agenda**

A movement over thirty years in the making, conservative Christianity has begun to make its influence felt at multiple levels of American culture and society. One distinguishing characteristic of Conservative Christians is their evangelical approach to the world; their goal is “to bring the world to Christ” through conversion to (Protestant) Christianity. They favor a fundamentalist approach to theology and they maintain a politically conservative commitment to reclaiming culture for Christ by enacting the social/cultural agenda crafted during the Reagan Revolution. Such ideological commitments distinguish conservative Christians from other evangelicals: Jerry Falwell is a conservative Christian; Billy Graham is an evangelical Christian.

To further build and maintain ideological consensus, conservative Christian groups have become embodied in a seemingly diverse range of forms -- political action committees, pastoral resource centers, research centers, think tanks -- as well as churches. One part of this initiative has been the emergence of an increasingly sophisticated Conservative Christian presence on the World Wide Web. Countering the “homosexual”/“gay” agenda has emerged as an important cornerstone of its ideological work, and the web has become a central domain for this initiative.

Papers in this session examine how such groups use language, visual design, and information technology to depict GLBTQ issues on the World Wide Web. Papers that investigate the communication of homophobic messages through these means are particularly encouraged.

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### **In Service of:**

#### **Narrative Histories, Political Strategies and Competing Identity Paradigms**

In declarative narratives – moments of identity performance that stake a claim in terms of personal narratives, public space or political action – persons not conforming to heterosexual norms often call upon “the past” to serve as explanation, legitimacy, proof and possibility. In such cases, the past that the speakers draws upon is historically uprooted, reinterpreted through contemporary ways of seeing and talking and put to work in supportive of present political needs. Papers in this session will consider the strategic employment of history in the formation of declarative narratives of identity, focusing on moments when the past is used as part of the present to bring legitimacy/authenticity to speakers’ claims to sexual and other subjectivities. In this way, the session as a whole will investigate how history is employed in identity performance and how history is reframed! – from new to old – by paradigms that preserve and contest the (sexual) present.

For more information about the session, or to submit an abstract for the session, please contact Rebecca Etz c/o [REBECCAETZ@yahoo.com](mailto:REBECCAETZ@yahoo.com)

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## **The Language of Same-Sex Civil Union and Gay Marriage in Cross-Cultural Contexts**

Debates on same-sex union and gay marriage have emerged across the globe in recent years. This session takes into account various approaches to lavender language use to consider these debates in cross-cultural contexts. Paper topics to date include: a cross-cultural analysis of same-sex union and gay marriage in Canadian and US media (Jennifer Hamilton, Acadia University); the quest for a common-law language for same-sex marriage in Israeli human rights campaigns (Liora Moriel, U Maryland); the language of sexual citizenship and belonging in French discussions of civil union (PaCS) and marriage (Denis Provencher, U Maryland Baltimore County); and debates on homosexuality and same-sex love (Richard Reitsma, Goucher College). Proposals are invited on these or other topics related to language use and same-sex marriage in cross-cultural perspective.

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## **Unpacking the language of homophobia**

Papers in this session use textual material from newspaper articles, life story narratives, conversations, dialogue from films or plays, advertising and other sources, to explore how messages about homophobia are expressed through textual practices. One concern in this session is to explore whether particular linguistic tokens contribute to the presentation and reception of homophobic messages within these textual moments. A related concern is the extent to which homophobic messages are socially constructed, e.g. through the interaction of speaker and audience, through connections to broader references to normative sexuality, and then read into the text. Under this argument, rather than being a features of textual form, homophobic messages are best seen as formations of meaning which (echoing Eve Sedgwick's remarks) may claim expression within any context. Exploring the social constraints on homophobic language becomes as important to the analysis as are descriptions of the linguistic practices, themselves.

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## **French Twist: Situer les homos dans la République**

This panel examines various articulations of homosexuality and sexual citizenship in contemporary France as they emerge on French TV, in the press, cinema and other first-person narratives. The panel aims to situate French gay and lesbian identities somewhere between: 1) the ever-present American referent "gay", which is associated with identity politics, *communautarisme*, and a "language of individualism and difference"; and 2) the French republican model of integration, assimilation and a "language of sameness and inclusion." In some cases, panelists call into question the notion of a globalized gay identity that has emerged out of an Anglo-American tradition. In all cases, panelists illustrate how French tradition Hexagon continues to impress its Gallic stamp on the meaning making in the lives of French gays and lesbians.

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### **Language and lavender space**

Presentations in this now-annual event on the conference program examine intersections of language, sexuality and geography in urban and rural settings. Of particular interest in these presentations is the way language use marks a site as "gay space" or otherwise enables public locations to be included within local depictions of gay geography. Of equal interest are the linguistic practices through which persons on the sexual margin create conditions of privacy or invoke protection from the regulatory gaze. Papers offering ethnographic and historical/documentary discussions of these themes are welcome.