

**Post-graduate, postdoc, associate tutor and faculty  
pre-conference reading group:  
Dissident citizenship, academia and activism  
Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> March, 12-2pm, in BH-257  
University of Sussex**

Prior to the *Dissident Citizenship: Queer Postcolonial Belonging* conference here at Sussex in June (June 10-11, 2010), the Brighton and Sussex Sexualities research Network (BSSN), in collaboration with NGender doctoral student seminars and the Centre for the Study of Sexual Dissidence, invites all interested post-graduates, post-docs, associate tutors and faculty to a pre-conference reading group.

The reading group is primarily structured around the BSSN conference panel which seeks to engage recent debates about the book *Out of Place: Interrogating Silences in Queerness/Raciality*, but will also engage with the overall conference themes and link what we can learn from these debates to wider issues to do with the academia/activism intersections that were debated at the BSSN annual conference last September.

The book *Out of Place*, its reception and print run have generated heated debate, and intervention about publishing, freedom of speech, censorship, gay imperialism, and the relative status and power of activists and academics invested in queer and lesbian and gay politics.

The point of the reading group and the conference panel is not to rehearse the specific debates which have already played out in relation to *Out of Place*, but to develop ideas and responses, and to provide a commentary which offers interpretation and does contextual work to situate these debates. The motivating question that the panel will address is 'what can we learn from this?' As the first stage of this work, the reading group will perhaps engage with: how 'gay imperialism' is articulated by Haritaworn et al. (as well as other authors making similarly-named critical interventions); how the debates surrounding the book reflect wider power dynamics between relatively privileged activists/academics and those who these debates seem to be 'defending'; how discourses within the debate potentially re-enforce perceived distinctions of lesser and greater power for activists and academics; in what ways the censorship and debate may have been productive; and who takes part in the debate – and who doesn't.

The reading group will offer an opportunity for pre-conference reflection and development in relation to this. To this end all participants are asked to make themselves familiar with four core documents, comprising the relevant chapter from *Out of Place*, the Raw Nerve apology, Peter Tatchell's response and Sara Ahmed's response:

- 1) Haritaworn, Jin, Tauqir, Tamsila, and Erdem, Esra. 2008. 'Gay Imperialism: Gender and Sexuality Discourse in the "War on Terror"' in Kuntsman, Adi and Miyake, Esperanza (eds) *Out of Place: Interrogating Silences in Queerness/Raciality*. London: Raw Nerve books. [pdf]
- 2) Raw Nerve Books: Peter Tatchell 'Apology and Correction' <http://www.rawnervebooks.co.uk/>
- 3) Peter Tatchell's commentary 'Academics smear Peter Tatchell' <http://www.petertatchell.net/politics/academics-smear-peter-tatchell.html>
- 4) Sara Ahmed's comments 'Problematic Proximities, or why Critiques of "Gay Imperialism" Matter' on Xtalk: <http://www.xtalkproject.net/?p=415>

The reading group is free and open to all. We encourage people to attend the later conference and participate as audience members in the panel but this not a condition of attending the reading group. We do ask that you register your interest in attending and that you make time to read these four documents and either propose questions for discussion in advance, or bring a question to the reading group.

**The four key texts and additional material will be available online at:**

<http://ngender.wordpress.com/>

Further information is also available from the BSSN website:

<http://www.cmis.brighton.ac.uk/bssn/>

**You can register by email to:**

ngenderseminars@googlemail.com

You can also get in touch via this email if you have any queries or would like to submit questions for discussion in advance.

