

ICS SEMINAR SERIES 2024

Polarisation against and within feminisms: Thinking queerly to overcome divides and challenge extremist mindsets

30 May 2024 | 11:30am - 1:00pm

Room: EZ.G.22 Parramatta South Campus

Abstract

Many debates around gender and sexuality collapse into entrenched polemical and oppositional positions. For example, in public discourse, the intensification of men's rights discourses online (the 'manosphere') which pits itself against what it sees as a divisive feminism; increasingly fundamentalist opposition to sexuality and gender diversity in schools and elsewhere. However, divisiveness also plays out in intra-community contexts and in gender theory. Examples include the political and academic camps of trans-exclusionary and trans-inclusive feminism; or critiques of identity politics (especially non-binary) that suggest that identity politics cannot challenge structural inequalities.

This paper proposes that the ethos underpinning such modes of thought are masculinist in their modes, reinforcing the fundamentally gendered binaries that are co-constitutive with other hierarchical binaries of racism, colonialism, and other social divisions. Influenced by queer theory and queer ethics I propose instead a non-binary ethico-political position as a way of theorising. In doing this I draw together what I see as other non-binary theories that have challenged polemical thought while being able to maintain ethical and political baselines. Having a positionality outside of the centre necessarily fosters this kind of thinking, and non-binary theory's most important impulse is to encourage plurality and capacity to sit with both/and modes of thought that do not erase the complexity of lived experience.

Biography

Lucy Nicholas (they/them) is Associate Professor of Gender and Sexuality, director of Genders and Sexualities Research (SaGR) at WSU, and co-lead of the Queer Cultures research program in ICS. They did their PhD at University of Edinburgh on getting rid of gender, before working at Portsmouth and Swinburne Universities. Their research is interested in diversity broadly, focusing on gender and sexuality diversity, social theory, feminisms, masculinities, and whiteness. They are author of many journal articles, and 2 books: one on 'post-gender theory' and one on the resurgence of masculinism.

Presenter: Lucy Nicholas

Discussant: Ryan Thorneycroft

Chair: Philippa Collin

Research Alignment:
Queer Cultures

**NEXT SEMINAR:
6 JUNE**