SUMMER INSTITUTE FOR SEXUALITIES, CULTURES, AND POLITICS:

QUEERNESS, COMMUNITY, AND CAPITAL: TOWARDS NEW ALLIANCES OF THE POLITICAL

(August 13-18, Skopje, Macedonia)

organized by

Institute for Social Sciences and Humanities “Euro-Balkan”
(Skopje, Macedonia)

in cooperation with

Faculty for Media and Communications at Singidunum University
(Belgrade, Serbia)
SUMMER INSTITUTE DESCRIPTION

The Summer Institute for Sexualities, Cultures, and Politics is a new permanent project initiated by the Department for Gender Studies at the Institute for Social Sciences and Humanities “Euro-Balkan”, Skopje, Macedonia.

The general aim of the Institute is to gather young post-graduate students, scholars and teaching staff from both Eastern and Western Europe and promote a shared platform for research and trans-disciplinary theoretical reflection on the complex modes of interweaving sexuality, culture and politics, and consequently of exchanging and questioning geopolitically determined discourses in the research of sexualities, gender studies, and queer theory. Our idea is to provide students, scholars and teachers with the opportunity to question, decenter and democratize these areas by way of deferring the notion of theoretical and geopolitical privilege which is often implied by these research areas, and thus to introduce new models of rethinking context-specific phenomena related to sexualities and, vice versa, to enrich theoretical paradigms with context specific phenomena and research.

In this way, the Institute’s long-term goal is to

(1) strategically stimulate the particularization and application of key ideas and theories in sexuality research locally, and to

(2) universalize and popularize crucial and underprivileged positions and ideas on the European level, regardless of the East/West divide which is still central to the development of queer theory and sexuality research.
Our endeavor is not to relativize the embeddedness and situatedness of knowledges about sexualities, but to recognize and disrupt the existing invisible borders that obstruct the free dissemination of ideas as they are being determined by various hegemonic forces – political, educational, economic - in both Eastern and Western contexts of doing academic and artistic work related with our desires, bodies, and sexualities.

**The theme of the 2012 Summer Institute for Sexualities, Cultures, and Politics is:**

“Queerness, Community, and Capital: Towards New Alliances of the Political”

In its first and founding activity in Summer 2012, The Institute for Sexualities, Cultures, and Politics aims at exploring and reflecting on the complex entanglements of queer theories and practices, the Political, and cultures. We will provide space to radically question the hegemonic regimes of political communities’ institutions/sustenance, as well as the global and regional regimes of thinking neo-liberal forces. Hence, the Institute’s goal is to trace the multiple pathways through which queerness enters or exits the political projects of community constitution, in its various forms: revived nationalisms, communism’s legacy and the European community, on the one hand, and the global neo-liberal markets’ imperatives and their consequent commodification of identities and processes of de-democratization and de-politicization.

Further, departing from such a research framework, the Institute aims towards re-visioning the dominant forms of queer political struggles and strategies of resistance; also, we want to investigate what are the possibilities stemming from queerness and its already existing political embodiments and specific historical experiences? What opportunities there are in various geopolitical contexts to rethink our shared and general categories of politics, resistance, and community?

Thus, by investigating these multiple entanglements, the Institute will be the host of critical and in-depth analyses of the position queer struggles have in the wider context of struggles for social justice, economic redistribution and human rights, and will provoke discussions about
the possibility of envisioning and enacting political alliances beyond the narrow boundaries of identity politics and the exclusionary logic and division of recognition and redistribution. Last but not least, we will particularly raise the question how the political influence of queer is being neutralized or re-radicalized in existing and allegedly queer-friendly political settings?

In the course of 18 days, the wide specter of topics that the Institute covers, are to be organized into a programme structured on the grounds of four major subjects. Each programme section includes morning lectures held by prominent scholars from Europe and SEE, reading seminars, joint discussions and participants’ presentations.

➢ PROGRAMME SECTIONS

✓ Programme Section 1: Queerness, the Political and Community (Lecturers: David M. Halperin, Jelisaveta Blagojević)

This programme subject will try to research, discuss and problematize the complex interweaving of sexuality, politics and community. The lectures and discussion will try to explore the position of sexuality in relation to hegemonic forms of communities, and community, in its Western conception, in general. Thus, some of the core problems that will be addressed include the imaginaries, discourses and institutional practices strategically deployed in communist, as well as nationalist utopian and communitarian projects, in relation to marginal and non-hegemonic sexualities (practices, communities and identities) and non-normative bodies. Further, these communal experiences will be regarded, differentiated or aligned, in relation to the contemporary European communal ideals and inspirations, and will further explore the impact these political apparatuses have on sexual struggles for justice and recognition. Of particular importance will be the exploration of the entanglements of governmentality tactics and biopolitical dispositives and the construction and proliferation of sexual identities, as much as their compliance or resistance to sexual normalizations.
Departing from contemporary political theories and political philosophy’s scholarship, the programme will further investigate the following subtopics: Queerness and the redefinition of the Political; State utopias, justice, jurisdiction and queer sufferings; Community immunization and queer exposures; Homonationalisms and (neo)liberalisms; What is the political in queer politics?, etc.

✓ Programme Section 2: *(Queer)* Arts, Culture, and Resistance *(Lecturer: Marina Gržinić)*

The lectures, presentations and discussions covered by this programme subject will try to think about and analyze the multiple cross-cuttings of artistic practices and cultural production with the sexual regimes defining the common, which is to say who belongs and who does not belong to a community?, which emotions and relations are considered as legible?, which bodies are rendered visible and whose statements are registered as audible? Departing from a variety of traditional art practices, through new media deployment, cultural activism, participatory art, different art collectives, performing and video arts, interventionist artistic actions and practices of reclaiming public spaces, artists and cultural workers and activists, we will explore the entire spectrum of tactics and strategies, forms and media, topics and modes of representation deployed and how do they contest and reconfigure the dominant political modes of sexual hierarchy, organization and framing of the common(s) and community. Not only being a medium for representation, art and cultural practices are to be observed as fields for making, instituting and creating, and thus their potential for transfiguring the dominant regimes of sexual visibility and publics will be saliently explored. Besides the actualized capacity for breaking with the existing regimes of relations and making communities otherwise, artworks will be also critically explored in their being the symbolic and cultural apparatus for moral and didactic political and sexual appeal as well as for sustaining current status quo in the dominant modes of communal relations and sexual inequalities. In this regard, a question of particular importance will be how current global
position of arts and creative cultures, in relation to neo-liberal and consumerist demands, influence cultural practices and aesthetic regimes of resistance and critique in the field of sexuality.

Furthermore, not only art, but multiplicity of cultural forms and Media cutting through the limits of community, assigning roles and distributing parts, such as pamphlets, billboards, city lights, media and video campaigns, public spaces, social networks etc. will be scrutinized as cultural practices sustaining sexual normalizations, but also as potential tools for undoing sexual hegemonies.

✅ Programme Section 3: Queering the General Strike and the Occupation

(Lecturer: Jamie Heckert)

What has emerged as a “movement” – the Occupy Movement – finds itself in a complex existential state: how does a movement define itself in the process its own emergence? How does a leaderless movement addresses society without authority? Occupy bears the mark of radical disidentification which runs both risks – of self-dissolution and conceptual expansionism, just as some 20 years ago queer theory emerged as an “X” which has to be saturated analytically but has been recognized as existential and ontological hybridity. This resemblance has been already noted (for example by Michael Warner) and raises pressing concerns related with the organization of the multitude.

Namely, how radically open is – and could be – the Occupy? How does the notion of occupation change when communal and micropolitical interests are inscribed in it – what makes the occupation queer? Is identity politics deconstructed from within inside Occupy? What is the status of queer – particular, universal, zeroed? – in the collective social choreographies of the general strike and the general intellect? Is Queer too theoretical and closed a concept to be used as theoretical and conceptual strategy of paradoxic principle of self-organizing?
THE LECTURERS: BIOS

David M. Halperin (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA)

David M. Halperin is a classicist by training; his early publications were on Hellenistic Greek poetics and ancient Greek philosophy. He currently works in the history of sexuality, lesbian and gay studies, and feminist and queer theory, and he has played a role in the institutionalization of queer studies within the academy. He is the author or editor of eight books, including One Hundred Years of Homosexuality (1989), The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader (1990), Saint Foucault (1997), How To Do the History of Homosexuality (2004), What Do Gay Men Want? (2008) and Gay Shame (2010). Among his courses is the notorious “How to be Gay: Male Homosexuality and Initiation,” which examines gay male sexuality and identity from the perspective not of sex but of social practices and cultural identifications, and is the topic of his forthcoming book of the same title.

Jelisaveta Blagojević (Singidunum University, Belgrade, Serbia)

Jelisaveta Blagojević works at the intersections of contemporary philosophy, media studies, gender and queer studies. She holds a Ph.D. in Gender Studies from the University of Novi Sad, and since 2006 she works as Associate Professor and Dean for Academic Affairs at the Faculty of Media and Communications, Singidunum University, in Belgrade. Since 2001 she works at the Belgrade Women’s Studies and Gender Research Center as a Coordinator and Lecturer, and since 2003 as a Visiting Lecturer at the Gender and Politics program at the Political Science Faculty, Belgrade University. She has been working as a Visiting Lecturer at different Universities in South East Europe. Among her major publications are Media/Power (editor, 2011), Kultura koja dolazi [Culture to Come] (2010), Hieroglyphs of Jealousy (2010), Zajednica onih koji nemaju zajednicu [Community without Community] (2008), Gender and Identity (co-editor, 2006).
Marina Gržinič (Slovenian Academy of Science and Art, Ljubljana, Slovenia / Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, Austria)

Marina Gržinič is doctor of philosophy and works as researcher at the Institute of Philosophy at the ZRC SAZU (Scientific and Research Center of the Slovenian Academy of Science and Art) in Ljubljana, and teaches at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. She also works as a freelance media theorist, art critic and curator. Marina Gržinič has published hundreds of articles and essays and several books. Among her latest works are *Situated Contemporary Art Practices. Art and Activism from (the East) of Europe* (2004), *Une fiction reconstruite. Europe de l’Est, post-socialisme et rétro-avant-garde* [Fiction Reconstructed. Eastern Europe, Postsocialism and Retro-avantgarde] (2005), *Avant-garde and Politics: The Eastern European Paradigm and the War in the Balkans* (2005), *Aesthetics of Cyberspace and the Effects of De-realisation* (2005), and *From Biopolitics to Necropolitics: The Metastasis of Democracy, Communications and the Mass Intellect* (with Sefik Seki Tatlic, 2011). She is also editor of the journal *Reartikulacija*. Grzinic has been involved with video art since 1982. In collaboration with Aina Smid, Grzinic produced more than 40 video art projects, a short film, numerous video and media installations, several websites and an interactive CD-ROM (ZKM, Karlsruhe, Germany).

Jamie Heckert (University of Essex, UK)

Jamie Heckert is an activist, scholar and yoga teacher living in the south of England. He intended to study chemistry and environmental studies when we went off to do his liberal arts degree at Grinnell College (USA), but found himself focusing on psychology and gender and women’s studies. His postgraduate studies in sociology at the University of Edinburgh combined interviews and personal insight with feminist, (post)anarchist and queer theories to rethink (sexual) politics. This scholarly work has always been intertwined with the evolution of his activism: organising Pride events with increasing ambivalence, teaching sex education with joy and exploring how it feels to put anarchy into practice. Jamie attempts to do this, in part, by weaving together personal stories and cultural analyses with academic theory and spiritual wisdom to create consciously performative lectures,
participatory workshops and engaging writing. As well as contributing to numerous scholarly and movement publications, Jamie is a founding member of the Anarchist Studies Network, co-editor (with Richard Cleminson) of *Anarchism & Sexuality: Ethics, Relationships and Power* (2011), editor of a special issue of *Sexualities*, and Love Life columnist for the web magazine *Bella Caledonia*. He loves to garden, to dance, to listen.