

'The Unexpected Horrible Side Effect of this Law': the criminalization of inter-racial sex and white male suicide in South Africa, 1950-1985.

A public lecture by Susanne M. Klausen, Professor of History, Carleton University in Ottawa, Senior Research Associate, Faculty of Humanities at the University of Johannesburg and 2018 Institute of Advanced Studies Visiting Fellow

Event Details

When: Thursday 22nd February 2018
Where: Austin Lecture Theatre, Arts, UWA
Cost: Free
RSVP: online via www.ias.uwa.edu.au/lectures/klausen

Upon winning power in 1948, the National Party (NP) immediately set out to end miscegenation in South Africa. The NP proclaimed that a central tenet of proper white sexuality was avoidance of sexual contact with people of different "races." Many men ignored this injunction and the new government placed primary responsibility for miscegenation on them – white men who lacked "color consciousness."

In 1950 the NP government passed the Immorality (Amendment) Act that criminalized extra-marital sex between whites and other races. The Act unleashed the police and courts to punish men who persisted in having sex with black women and the women with whom they were caught. Tens of thousands of people of all races were prosecuted for contravening the law and the vast majority were white men and their black so-called accomplices. Many served time in prison, though not in equal proportion. Lacking resources required to access legal counsel, more black women than white men went to jail. However, white men were subjected to another, unique type of punishment: intentional shaming by public exposure that accompanied arrest and subsequent trials. For many men, the emotional suffering induced by shaming was so intense they committed suicide, leaving behind families forced to carry their shame.

This public lecture will discuss a major lacuna in our understanding of the apartheid social order, namely the meaning and enforcement of compulsory heterosexuality for whites. This study examines the policing of white male heterosexuality and its importance to the apartheid project.

About Susanne Klausen



Professor Klausen is the author of numerous essays and two monographs: *Race, Maternity, and the Politics of Birth Control in South Africa* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) and the prize-winning *Abortion Under Apartheid: Nationalism,*

Sexuality, and Women's Reproductive Rights in South Africa (Oxford University Press, 2015). She is currently working on two research projects. The first is a study of the Immorality (Amendment) Act (1950) that criminalized inter-racial sexual relationships between whites and other "races" in South Africa until 1985. This study aims to understand the methods the state utilized to police inter-racial sexual relationships, and the racialized and gendered impact on South Africans of arrest and public exposure for contravening the law. The second project is a transnational history of legalized eugenic abortion in British Commonwealth countries. Funded initially by the Wellcome Trust, this project explains the inclusion of a eugenic clause in the British Abortion Act (1967) and the uptake of that clause in subsequent abortion legislation enacted in Commonwealth jurisdictions. She received her PhD in History from Queen's University at Kingston in 1999 and is the recipient of numerous research awards.

The Institute of Advanced Studies

Throughout the year the IAS hosts visits from distinguished scholars, public intellectuals and artists. These visits form part of an annual program of public lectures, masterclasses, symposia and workshops. Visit our website for more information www.ias.uwa.edu.au.



THE UNIVERSITY OF
**WESTERN
AUSTRALIA**