

Séminaire AGS – Printemps 2026

Programme

Thursday, March 5 — Hannelore Van Bavel

5:30 PM to 7:30 PM, Henri Janne Room, Building S, 15th floor

Genital Modifications and Moral Boundary-making: Medical Perspectives on FGM/C versus FGCS in Belgium and the Netherlands

Abstract: This chapter explores how medical professionals who perform female genital cosmetic surgery (FGCS) in Belgium and the Netherlands perceive and differentiate between female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and FGCS. While FGM/C is criminalised in both countries, FGCS is not, even though many FGCS procedures technically fall within the definition of FGM/C. In 2008, Dutch professional societies attempted to clarify this distinction but failed to provide concrete criteria, instead relying on what was framed as a self-evident moral boundary. As a result, individual clinicians are left to determine where FGM/C ends and FGCS begins. Drawing on interviews with healthcare professionals, the chapter examines how this boundary is constructed in everyday practice. It asks how clinicians understand and differentiate between FGM/C and FGCS, whether they see the practices as distinct or overlapping, and what forms of reasoning they draw upon in doing so. The analysis shows that clinicians primarily rely on the ethical concepts of harm and autonomy, but that these are interpreted through implicit cultural assumptions. In practice, FGCS is framed as an autonomous, legitimate medical choice, while FGM/C is constructed as inherently harmful and coercive. These distinctions are not neutral: they reflect and reproduce racialised moral hierarchies, through which medicine actively participates in defining whose bodily practices are recognised as acceptable and whose are not.

Biography: Dr Hannelore Van Bavel is a postdoctoral researcher at RHEA Research Centre for Gender, Diversity, and Intersectionality (VUB), with an interdisciplinary background in social anthropology (PhD), sociology (MSc), gender and diversity studies (MA), and currently pursuing a MSc in Sexology. Her research examines why societies across time and place modify genitalia, and why different forms of genital modification provoke such different moral and legal responses. More specifically, she studies the contrasting treatment of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and female genital cosmetic surgery (FGCS), and what this reveals about the intersections of gender, race, class, culture, and coloniality. Her current project explores FGCS in Kenya, with attention to the increasingly blurred boundaries between FGCS and medicalised FGM/C.

Mercredi 15 avril – Paul Rivest

17h à 19h, Salle Henri Janne, Bâtiment S, 15^{ème} étage

Entre socialisations et reconfigurations normatives : enquête sur les sexualités transmasculines en France

Résumé : En matière de sexualité, le genre occupe une place structurante : les hommes et les femmes apprennent à s’y engager de manière différente et à y occuper des rôles contrastés. Dans ce contexte, comment les personnes ayant fait l’objet de socialisations féminines en matière de genre et de sexualité s’y engagent-elles par la suite en adoptant des positionnements qui s’en distinguent ? Cette intervention propose de présenter les principales contributions d’une récente recherche doctorale menée sur les sexualités transmasculines en France. Des sexualités vécues pré-transition à celles qui lui succèdent, elle retrace et met en avant des parcours, des pratiques et des rapports identificatoires multiples, fortement marqués par des vécus différenciés vis-à-vis de l’hétérosexualité et de l’insertion au sein des communautés.

Biographie : Paul Rivest est docteur en anthropologie (Université d’Aix-Marseille, 2025). Il est l’auteur d’une thèse portant sur les sexualités transmasculines en France. Ses intérêts de recherche portent sur les articulations entre masculinités, sexualités et temporalités. Il est actuellement postdoctorant à l’IRIS où il mène un projet de recherche sur les sexualités des seniors HSH.

Wednesday, May 6 — Wannes Dupont

5:00 PM to 7:00 PM, Henri Janne Room, Building S, 15th floor

Unwilling To Know: Male Homosexuality at the Crossroads of Europe, 1870-1965

Abstract: Since the 1970s, historians have claimed that an insatiable 'will to know' has powered the growing concern with homosexuality across Europe and the West, especially from the late nineteenth century onwards. In the book *Unwilling To Know* (Cambridge University Press, 2026), Wannes Dupont challenges this dominant narrative by demonstrating how and why, unlike in neighboring France, Germany, Britain, and the Netherlands, a mixture of silence and code surrounded homosexuality in Belgium until well after the Second World War. Through internationally comparative analyses, and with particular reference to the importance of religion, he complicates overly monolithic views of European or Western developments based on a handful of familiar national cases.

Biography: Wannes Dupont is a Lecturer in the History of Sexuality at the University of Edinburgh. His research focuses on queer history, reproductive politics, and the intersections of biopolitics and religion. He has previously published articles in journals such as *History Workshop Journal* and the *Journal of the History of Sexuality* and is currently working on the politicisation of sex in the international community during the early Cold War era.

Entrée libre, inscription nécessaire sur simple email à ags@ulb.be

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