

Call for Papers

Deadline for abstracts (400 words) and short biographical notes (150 words): October 15, 2023

Notification of acceptance: November 1, 2023

Submission of full draft papers: February 1, 2024

Submission of final papers: June 15, 2024

Languages: English, French

MLA format

Created in 1990, the peer-reviewed academic journal Alizés dedicated to English Studies will now be published online annually by the Presses Universitaires Indianocéaniques (PUI), Université de La Réunion. The next issue is scheduled for publication in 2024. It will be devoted to the following theme:

Sex (Mis)Education in the English-Speaking World

Key words: sex education, sexual literacy, sexual socialization, sexual health, pornography, gender, feminist critique, post-colonial/Indian ocean studies

What is peculiar in modern societies, in fact, is not that they consigned sex to a shadow existence, but that they dedicated themselves to speaking of it *ad infinitum*, while exploiting it as a secret. (Foucault 35)

Michel Foucault's perception of sexuality as being both overly discussed and yet somehow taboo, remains relevant today when we consider the visibility of sex in modern media and the consequent complexities and ambiguities of contemporary discourse on sex, sex education, sexuality and the sex industry. The hypervisibility of sex clearly has an effect on our attitudes towards sex and how young people are educated on the subject in both the public and private spheres.

This call for papers seeks contributions that will engage with the competing forms of formal and informal sex education as they pertain to the English-speaking world. Our aim is to propose varied, innovative and interdisciplinary approaches to the broad question of sex education, welcoming papers from historians, linguists, literary critics, sociologists, specialists in gender studies and others. Keeping in mind Foucault's notion that sex is both hyper visible and taboo, we aim at

providing in-depth discussions which will help better understand both formal and informal sex education taking into account the fact that sex education is fraught with cultural tensions and political feuds. If, as feminist activist Shulamith Firestone is sometimes credited as having said, “the personal is political”, sex and thus sex education (whether formal or informal) is particularly so. What constitutes a proper sex education for some is clearly antithetical to what counts as a liberating, positive sex education for others. Since sex education is steeped in identity politics and has evolved in a nonlinear way, the possibilities for miseducation are vast. We will examine sex (mis)education in the English-speaking world from three different angles:

1. Sex education throughout history:

Contributions here will be looking at sex education policies and discourses through time, the challenges faced, their sources of inspiration and the public reaction. Proposals will engage with the emergence in the nineteenth century of a medical discourse regarding sexuality. They will, for instance, focus on the work of education pioneers such as Henry Havelock Ellis (1894) or Walter M. Gallichan (1919); on the reformist movements which first encouraged sex education or on the resurgence of certain forms of sexual repression at the time. The impact of syphilis and other sexually transmitted diseases – and later on the AIDS epidemic – on sex education policies and public health initiatives will also be one of our concerns, as well as the nonlinear history of the prevention of the sexual abuse of children (Olafson et.al.; Plummer). The role of religion in sex education policies and debates will also be central, along with the politics of abstinence as part of sex education, the challenges of implementing sex education policies in schools and other institutions (taboos, misconceptions and ethical implications) or the question of recent changes in sex education course content (Knibiehler). Proposals will also look at the historiography of sex education, focusing for instance on alternative perspectives to the accepted dichotomy of a comprehensive sex education on one hand versus a more conservative approach on the other (Sauerteig & Davidson). They will also consider the white middle-class bias affecting sex education in the United States for instance (Bass & Coleman).

2. Sex-education and feminist perspectives:

Here we invite contributions that focus on the way feminist critiques have renewed perspectives and approaches to sex-education and influenced (or failed to influence) governmental sex education policies in the English-speaking world. Since, as Audre Lorde put it “the erotic is the nurturer and nursemaid of all our deepest knowledge” (Lorde 56), contributions interrogating the influence activists and scholars have had on re-envisioning sex-education will be welcome (Boston

Women's Health Book Collective; hooks; Hill Collins). Proposals will also tackle the way feminist critiques have discussed reproductive rights policies and contextualized the specificity of the double treatment reserved to women of color (Davis). Here the circulation of such knowledge across borders could also be analyzed, as is arguably the case of Vergès' work on the forced sterilization of black women in La Réunion in the 1970s (Vergès). Considering how younger generations have been informed (or more frequently not informed) about these policies and representations can shed light on sex-(mis)education as it pertains to the intersection of race, gender and class throughout history. Other areas of exploration could include but are not limited to the influence of other postcolonial writers (Bourbonnais) and Islamic feminism on formal and informal sex education (Ali ; Badran).

3. Informal sources of sex education:

Focusing on sexual socialization, this angle of analysis will examine informal sources of sex education, looking at the broad questions of what counts as sex education and also who the sex-educators should or could be (Shtarkshall). Proposals will deal with diverse sources of information from past and present societies: from early sources of pornographic literature (such as the infamous autobiographical *My Secret Life* (Walter)), to guidebooks on married life (Venette), erotic literature (Devereaux; James) or postcolonial literature on sexuality (Darkoa Sekyiamah); examining the emergence of pornographic images in the late nineteenth century, eroticism in visual arts – comics in particular (Sanders) – or sexual representations in television shows for instance. Papers on the emergence of female sex positivity, queer sexuality and other themes in pop music (Young M.A.; Ariana Grande; Doja Cat; Lil Nas X etc...), and how hip hop/pop culture can be seen as an easily accessible potential source of sex (mis)education are encouraged (Morgan; Pough). Proposals on sex education in social media, mass media, media content and the influence of cultural, religious and educational contexts on sex education will also be welcomed.

We encourage papers that engage with aspects of sex education in the English-speaking world, including but not limited to the following themes:

- The impact of the AIDS epidemic on sex education policies and public health initiatives
- The relationship between sex education policies and reproductive rights
- The intersection of race, gender, and sexuality in sex education policies
- The ethical and pedagogical challenges of implementing sex education policies in schools and other institutions

- The alleged dichotomy between comprehensive sex education and more conservative policies in private and/or religious schools
- The role of religion in sex education policies and debates
- The impact of social media and digital technologies on informal sources of sex education
- The role of popular culture (TV, hip hop, etc.) in informal sex-education

Submission Guidelines:

We invite authors to submit original research article proposals – a 400-word abstract along with a short biographical note (150 words) – by **October 15, 2023**.

Book reviews of recent or understudied works that engage with the aforementioned proposals are also welcome.

The proposals will be emailed to the editors:

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All selected proposals will have to be submitted by the 1st of February 2024, and will be subject to double-blind peer review.

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