MA in Sexual Dissidence
The Centre for the Study of Sexual Dissidence, or Sex Diss as it is affectionately known, is a space that brings people together to analyse and interrogate norms related to sexuality. Sex Diss was established over 20 years ago, in 1990, and our MA was one of the first of its kind in the world. Our MA continues to provide a specialist focus on queer studies, training students to bring a radical approach to the study of sexuality - and of identity, eroticism, relationships and kinship more broadly.

Why study with us?

"It is not only about sexuality. I was taught about race, about class – I learned what power really is...The MA taught me a lot about desire. I also learned that sexuality is not only about LGBT issues – that it is about norms and how people live around them and challenge them."  
He Xiao Pei, Director of Pink Space Sexuality Research Centre, China

Our MA is a unique queer studies programme that is jointly convened by the School of English and the School of Global Studies at the University of Sussex.

Build a firm foundation, then take things further

At its heart the MA has two core courses that give you a comprehensive, in-depth training in the field. The first core course, Critical Issues in Queer Theory, lays down the foundations for your study, exploring the historical, social, political, and intellectual contexts in which queer studies emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, and introducing key theoretical concepts. The second core course, Global Queer, extends and applies these concepts in a contemporary global context, focusing on issues like human rights, neoliberalism, globalisation, border security and immigration, international development, and war, particularly the war on terror.

Tailor your learning to your interests and priorities

Alongside the core courses, you get to take optional courses in a broad range of areas including literature, international relations, anthropology, film, popular culture, digital culture, media studies, contemporary critical theory, international development, and feminism and gender studies. You can tailor your MA so that you cover the things that really get you going – or branch out in another direction entirely; either way you will emerge with an MA experience that is unique to you, your interests and career plans.

Cross disciplines and think differently

Co-convened by the Schools of English and Global Studies, the MA is genuinely interdisciplinary, offering core modules that cross disciplines and drawing together courses, students, and academics from the arts, humanities, social sciences, policy, development, and activism. The MA will help you develop skills that would be useful in a variety of careers, for instance politics, advocacy, literature, arts, or journalism.

"We often attract students with an interest in activism and international organisation. The MA is a good pathway into a PhD, and some students take this path, while others go on to work for nongovernmental or human rights organisations."  
Cynthia Weber, Professor in International Relations, University of Sussex

Engage with students, faculty and the wider community

Learning outside the classroom

"Exposure to different people and different ideas is one of the main things I have got out of my involvement with Sex Diss over the years; there are constant conversations and dialogue between faculty, postgraduates and undergraduates from different disciplines."  
Joseph Ronan, PhD Student, University of Sussex

Your MA education doesn’t just happen in class. As a research centre, Sex Diss brings UK and international thinkers and writers to Sussex to share their work and engage in dialogue with our students, so that your learning is constantly on the cutting edge. Sex Diss also houses regular postgraduate-run research activities such as a reading group and a film club. Students are actively involved in determining the direction of the Centre’s work and are a core part of our intellectual community here at Sussex.

For MA students Sex Diss is a place where you can grow politically, professionally, and personally and work with like-minded people. The relationships you build at Sex Diss can be pivotal in shaping your future.
“As a queer, or a person interested in queer theory, you can feel a little isolated intellectually and socially... Sex Diss gave me a ready-made group of like-minded people who were interested in going out and having fun as well as studying. I really value that.”

Béatrice Châteauvert-Gagnon, Doctoral Researcher, Sussex University

Make links with the local community

Sex Diss is a community that spans the University of Sussex, Brighton and beyond. We are lucky to be based in Brighton, a centre of queer culture. Sex Diss has active links with the community, developing cultural events with local queer arts organisations and bringing international queer performers, artists, and film-makers to Brighton.

“Why get involved with Sex Diss? Why not? You’ll be part of an evolving research centre, network with interesting academics, listen to excellent guest speakers and meet new friends who share your love of academia. The Centre is an excellent resource – not just for those interested in studying Queer Theory, but also those people who are fascinated by sexual dissidence in all of its forms – theoretical, visual, cultural and literary.”

Ashton Spacey, former Sex Diss MA student

Apply for the MA

If you study full-time you will take four 12 week courses: two core courses and two optional courses that you choose yourself. Optional courses are offered in a range of disciplines and could include topics like:

• Gender Politics and Social Research
• Gender, Sexuality, and the Postcolonial
• Sexuality and Development
• Activism for Development and Social Justice
• Queering Popular Culture
• Sexualities and Digital Culture

You complete the MA by writing a dissertation on a topic of your choice, with supervision from a member of the University of Sussex faculty.

Get in touch

If you want to know more about the Centre or are thinking of applying for the MA feel free to contact us with any queries.

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www.sussex.ac.uk/cssd