CALL FOR PAPERS
Centre for Asian Legal Studies
The Life and Future of British Colonial Sexual Regulation in Asia
National University of Singapore, Faculty of Law  8-9 October 2015

Please Circulate.

The Centre for Asian Legal Studies (CALS) is soliciting proposals for participation in a conference entitled, The Life and Future of British Colonial Sexual Regulation in Asia. The conference will be convened by Asst. Prof. Lynette J. Chua of the National University of Singapore (NUS) and Prof. Michael Hor of the University of Hong Kong, and will be held on 8-9 October 2015 at NUS in Singapore. Abstracts must be for work that is original and has not been published previously.

A major publication is anticipated. The Hong Kong Law Journal will consider selected conference papers for a focus issue.

Scholars who would like to participate in this conference should submit an abstract of 150 words and a biographical sketch of 100 words by April 15, 2014. Proposals should focus primarily on the conference scope and objective set out in this call for papers. Funding may be available for those who are selected (no separate funding application is required). Decisions, including funding availability, will be announced by 15 May 2015. Complete versions of all conference papers must be submitted by 10 September 2015.

Conference scope and objective

Legal reform concerning issues of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) is a contemporary phenomenon that generates rich debates and contestations. Whereas the struggles in countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States have turned toward the legal recognition of same-sex relationships, parenting, and adoption, most former British colonies continue to deal with the persistence of colonial sexual regulation and its legacies after achieving independence. In the Asian region, Singapore's Court of Appeal recently upheld the constitutionality of section 377A of the Penal Code, as did the Indian Supreme Court on its section 377. In Malaysia, the government continues to use its revised version of sections 377 and 377A on opposition politicians. In Myanmar, activists are beginning to raise public awareness about their section 377 of the Penal Code. In Hong Kong, although section 377 has been repealed, legal debates have emerged about the age of consent and other post-repeal issues.

These developments raise concerns not only about the rights of SOGI minorities but also questions such as: How do and should today’s courts of independent nations decide on the continuing validity of sexual regulation inherited from the British colonial era? What is the role of legislature? How can SOGI minorities achieve equality and social change? How do and should activists advocate for reform?
The conference organizers hope to bring together scholars who study various facets of same-sex sexual regulation, including recent developments, its colonial legacies, and its future in Asia. The goal is to share insights on new research and collectively showcase contemporary scholarship on a timely issue in the region. With the above in mind, the conference papers may focus on one or more of the following related to section 377 (‘carnal intercourse against the order of nature’) and section 377A (‘gross indecency’) of the penal code, and other similar provisions inherited from the British by its former colonies in the Asian region: doctrinal analysis of judicial decisions, legislative contestation over repealing/retaining the law, new interpretations of the legal history of the provisions, activist campaigns/litigation efforts, post-repeal developments and further legal reforms, and feminist or other critical analyses of related judgments etc. They could feature one or more jurisdictions that were former British colonies in the Asian region, widely construed to include South Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia, and the Pacific Islands.


Michael Hor is Dean of the Faculty of Law, University of Hong Kong. He specializes in criminal justice, and publishes on and teaches criminal law, evidence, and criminal procedure. Before his appointment in Hong Kong, he was professor of law at NUS and the Chief Editor of the Singapore Journal of Legal Studies. In addition, he has been a Distinguished Visitor at the Law Faculty of the University of Toronto, a Visitor at the Oxford Centre for Criminology, and Visiting Professor at the University of Hong Kong Law Faculty, where he was an advisor to its Centre for Comparative and Public Law. His work has appeared in the Singapore Journal of Legal Studies, the Singapore Academy of Law Journal, the Singapore Yearbook of International Law, Hong Kong Law Journal, Lawasia, and Criminal Law Forum.

CALS aims to establish NUS Law as a global centre of excellence for the study of law in Asia, shifting the focus of Asian legal studies from Europe and North America to Singapore. It focuses on developing cutting-edge Asian law research, publications, and events, particularly related to justice and law reform issues across the region. It is organizing several ambitious research programmes, such as on Myanmar and socio-legal inquiry. It also builds on NUS Law’s capacity-building work to offer regional scholars chance to spend time in Singapore to research, teach, and participate in conferences.

The Hong Kong Law Journal is a leading English-language, peer-reviewed journal in the Asian region, providing up-to-date, academic, authoritative and critical analysis of current legal issues in the region, as well as comparative, jurisprudential, international, and interdisciplinary material relevant to the study of law. The Journal enjoys a wide circulation throughout the common law world. It is available online on Westlaw, indexed by Scopus, the Social Sciences Citation Index, Current Contents/Social & Behavioral Sciences, and the Index to Legal Periodicals, as well as abstracted on the Social Science Research Network.

For more information, please email calss@nus.edu.sg

Important Deadlines

Submission of Abstract: 15 April 2015
Full Paper Submission: 10 September 2015
Conference: 8-9 October 2015