



Universität Hamburg

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Date: Thursday, 27<sup>th</sup> June, 2019

Time: 18:30-20:00

Room: ESA O 122

Edmunds-Siemers-Allee 1 (East)

20146 Hamburg

Language: English

*Talk and discussion:*

## "Comparative Queer Southeast Asian Studies"

Prof. Dr. Ward Keeler

University of Texas at Austin

Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg (Delmenhorst)

### **Abstract**

Southeast Asia has a long-standing reputation for affording people of non-normative gender and sexuality relative tolerance. This flexible approach to gender fits into a general understanding that all ongoing relationships are necessarily hierarchical in nature. Queer people are tolerated as long as they know their place. Louis Dumont's analysis of hierarchy proves useful here, when he shows that hierarchical relationships are based on mutual interdependence through difference. Yet LGBT activists mounting campaigns against legal discrimination insist that being queer should have no consequences. A growing backlash against queer people appears to stem from just such demands for recognition without discrimination; the reprisals are against claims that difference should make no difference.

### **Biography**

Ward Keeler is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Texas at Austin. He has conducted extensive fieldwork in Java and Bali (Indonesia), and in Burma. His work has focused on performance, gender, language, and hierarchy in all three societies. His publications include monographs on Javanese shadow plays, and on Burmese Buddhism and gender, a textbook for the Javanese language, his translation of an Indonesian novel, and CDs of classical Burmese music, as well as a number of academic journal articles. A textbook for the Burmese language that he has co-authored will be published by Hong Kong University Press in 2020. As a fellow this academic year at the Hansewissenschaftskolleg in Delmenhorst, Germany, he is currently researching shifting aesthetic preferences in the three societies in Southeast Asia where he has been conducting fieldwork since the 1970s.

