**Announcement of the ARC-GS 2013 MA Thesis Prize Winners**

The ARC-GS MA Thesis Prize and two honorable mentions were formally awarded on Friday December 13th, 2013 at 15.30, during a short ceremony before the ARC-GS December lecture.

This year's prize committee consisted of Robby  Davidson, Stephanie Steinmetz, Rachel Spronk, Eline Severs and Saskia Wieringa (chair)

The committee was pleasantly surprised by the quantity (11) and quality of the MA theses submitted, from various disciplines and several universities. The broad range of topics analysed and methodologies used was also striking. Clearly, sex and gender studies in The Netherlands are thriving. As in other years the criteria for the prize were innovation, methodology, conceptual framework and analytical strength.

After a long debate the committee decided unanimously that Zoe Neilson, with her thesis entitled “‘She represents all that is wretched about Britain’ Folk devils and moral panic in contemporary Britain” is awarded the first prize. A cheque of €500 will be granted to her.

The committee feels that the author has produced a thesis on a topic that has hardly received any scholarly attention, if at all, so far.  The research therefore had to start afresh. The conceptual framework chosen, the concepts of folk devils and moral panics, is aptly and creatively used. The analysis is coherent and consistent. The methodology consisted of discourse analysis of a large number of sources (the direct quotes should have been referenced complete with dates). The historical analysis provided gives the topic depth. The thesis is eminently readable. These are all strong points. The committee also noted some issues that might be improved such as a definition of a core concept, i.e. flare, and the thesis could have profited from a more clear specification of the media analysis.

Two theses qualify for the honourable mention. In no particular order I start with the thesis by Anouk Evers, entitled “Barack Obama, back off!, framing strategies and postcolonial discourse in debating Uganda’s anti-homosexuality bill.” This thesis is praised for its balanced theoretical approach and its methodology. Fieldwork on same-sex relations in Uganda is not easy, particularly not when there is only limited time. The approach chosen, framing theory in a postcolonial context, provides an interesting lens to analyse the issue at hand. The attempt to look beyond binaries and dichotomies is commendable. The presentation of the findings, however, might have been more structured, and the thesis as a whole suffers from a lack of transparency in writing. The discussion on human and sexual rights and the Yogyakarta Principles could have received more attention.

The other honourable mention is for the thesis of Jeroen Romeijn, entitled “Same sex couples and their rights; an event history analysis of the introduction of same-sex unions and adoption rights for same-sex couples in western Europe.” This thesis contains an excellent and innovative quantitative method for assessing same-sex rights. The committee was impressed by the systematic and well-structured analysis of the methodology proposed. However the operationalization of the variables raised some concerns. The sub-questions were not always formulated clearly, and the spatial analysis that was promised ultimately was not provided. Also noted was a slight shift between the central question and the final conclusion.

(Written by Prof. dr. Saskia Wieringa)