Divergent Queer Modernities: Rethinking Religion, Capitalism and (Post) Coloniality
Presented by Professor Peter A. Jackson

Date: Friday 7 November 2014
Time: 4:00pm
Location: Building 20, Room 2
RSVP: By 31 October to vera@uow.edu.au
All Welcome

Abstract
In this lecture I build on some of my earlier work on gender, sexuality and modernity in Thailand and place Thailand in the context of recent debates on modernity. Ultimately, a consideration of what have been called ‘divergent’ modernities can force a rethinking of models of modernity which were originally developed to describe European societies. Arif Dirlik has argued that the decline and fall of socialism in the 1980s not only opened the way to the globalisation of capital but also led to reimagined forms of “tradition”, “culture” and “religion” taking over from “a now defunct socialism the task of speaking for those … cast aside by capitalist modernity”. The result, Dirlik argues, has been a post-Cold War “proliferation of modernities, which now find expression in the fragmentation of a single modernity into multiple and alternative modernities”. I draw on several lines of research in Thai queer history to argue that in key respects twenty-first century East and Southeast Asian queer cultures are diverging from LGBTQ cultures in the (post)Christian West and other world regions, such as the Muslim societies of the Middle East and Africa. In particular, I consider: diverging fundamentalist and supernatural trends in Asian religions; capitalism as a domain of queer autonomy in Asia; and the historical roles of “non-colonised” Thailand and Japan in the emergence of modern queer cultures in Southeast and East Asia. My aim is to critique twentieth-century theorisations of religion and modernity, capitalism, and postcoloniality as a starting point for developing analytical models better capable of describing and accounting for the diversity of queer cultures that inhabit the early twenty-first century world, which we might refer to as ‘divergent queer modernities’.

Bio
Peter Jackson is Professor in the Department of Gender, Media and Cultural Studies in the College of Asia and the Pacific at the Australian National University. He has written extensively on modern Thai cultural history with special interests in religion, sexuality, and critical theoretical approaches to mainland Southeast Asian cultural history.

The lecture will be followed by the launch of The Routledge Handbook of Sexuality Studies in East Asia, edited by Mark McLelland and Vera Mackie in the foyer of Building 20 from 5:30.

For further information please contact Vera Mackie vera@uow.edu.au