The Centre for Work, Organisation and Wellbeing

invite you to a seminar:

“Masculinity and Men’s Magazines in 1950s America: An introduction”

by

Dr Emma Ruckley

When: 1:30 – 3:00 pm, Wednesday 11 May 2011
Where: Room 1.12, Building N63 (Business 3), Nathan campus
Food: Lunch will be served; please RSVP

Abstract: During the 1950s, the men’s magazine industry in the United States underwent something of a boom, hitting circulations of over 1 million for the first time, and basking in the almost instant success of Playboy magazine, which was launched in 1953. Hoping to emulate the Playboy phenomenon, several new men’s magazines were launched, while well-established magazines (like Esquire) tried to rejuvenate their image to keep up with the competition. While the inclusion of more risqué content in some of these magazines inevitably drew criticism, the magazines were full of editorials, articles, regular features, letters to the editor, cartoons, and advertisements that provide valuable insight into contemporary ideas about gender roles and, more particularly, the diverse masculine ideals that were visible in popular culture. Different magazines catered for different male audiences, and often promoted very distinctive masculine ideals as a result. While popular TV sitcoms such as Happy Days and Bewitched have painted the 1950s as a decade characterised by rigid and rather traditional ideas about gender and gender roles, the world of men’s magazines reveals a persistent anxiety about American masculinity and an array of competing and contradictory masculine ideals that challenged contemporary social norms.

Speaker: Before moving to Brisbane and reinventing herself as a Research Fellow in GBS, Emma Ruckley was an American historian based in the UK. After completing her PhD on masculinity in the popular culture of 1950s America at Oxford University, she went on to work as a lecturer there in American History. She is currently working on an ARC project on gender equity in Australian universities, and is realising that Brisbane is rainier than she imagined.

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