

Opening of the Academic year – the history of ‘ordinary citizens’ and their relation to power

Date: 23 September 2022

Location: Trippenhuis, Amsterdam

The beginning of a new academic year is marked by the annual RSPH opening event. The theme of this year’s opening is writing the history of “ordinary citizens” and their relation to power. Harm Kaal (Radboud University) and Marnix Beyen (University of Antwerp) will deliver an introduction, after which journalist and author Marcia Luyten will give a lecture and discuss the theme.

Since the opening offers a sneak preview of the summer school scheduled at the end the academic year, all research master students are encouraged to attend!

Course descriptions

C.1 Introductory Course: What is Political History?

Supervisors: dr. Peter van Dam and dr. Jeroen van Zanten (University of Amsterdam)

Course period: 1st semester | November – December 2022 (week 45-50) | 6 meetings

NB: Meetings take place on Tuesdays, 13.00-15.00h in Amsterdam

Credits: 5 – 6 ECTS

Registration: before 15 September 2022 (bureau@onderzoekschoolpolitiegegeschiedenis.nl)

What is political history? Among historians and social scientists definitions of and approaches to political history have diverged immensely. In this course, students explore approaches relevant to the history of politics and discuss the conceptualization of political history and the use of key concepts.

Participants in this course will learn:

- How to define and analyze key concepts in the history of politics;
- How to evaluate historical studies from a conceptual and theoretical perspective;
- How to use and incorporate key concepts in the analysis of sources for the study of the political history

Themes and concepts to be discussed include the concept of the political, power & state formation, political culture, international politics, citizenship, politics beyond the nation and civil society.

The course will be taught in Dutch or English (depending on the language skills of the participants).

Requirements

- Participation: students have to be present and prepared.
- Preparing a discussion: a weekly discussion is prepared and introduced by a selected group of participants.
- Pitch and book review: at every meeting, one or more students pitch (ca. 2 minutes) a historical study which she or he deems a good example of what political history is or should be. A more extensive review of this study is handed in in writing (1000 words max.) a week after the initial pitch.
- Final paper: Participants write a paper of 3000 words, which answers the question of this course: What is political history?

C.3 Summer School Writing Political History from Below: Theory and Practice

Supervisors: Marnix Beyen (University of Antwerp) and Harm Kaal (Radboud University)

Dates: 3 – 7 July 2023

Credits: 3 – 5 ECTS

Registration: before 1 February 2023 (bureau@onderzoekschoolpolitiekegeschiedenis.nl)

The 2023 summer school is dedicated to studying politics ‘from below’. Assessing the state-of-the-art in 2013, Willibald Steinmetz and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt concluded that ‘governments, monarchs, parties, or parliaments ... still get the bulk of attention in many new political histories’. Although this still holds true today, studying politics from below or at the intersection of the ‘formal political world of representation and the informal political world of everyday life’ (Lawrence 2009) has been on the up. Testimony to this is research by political historians on petitioning, correspondence, electoral culture, public opinion formation, popular culture, the rise of the citizen-consumer, and the mass media, among other topics. In political theory and philosophy, too, the notion of ‘the people’ and bottom-up perspectives on political representation and democracy are en vogue.

Yet, those interested in such approaches to political history are confronted with a range of challenges. First of all, the lack of a shared vocabulary among political historians. Doing political history from below comes with a variety of concepts, such as ‘popular politics’, ‘the politics of everyday life’, ‘subaltern politics’, ‘ordinary politics’, and ‘public politics’. Definitions often remain vague. Second, a (supposed) lack of sources and representativeness: archives are highly geared towards offering access to high politics (institutional and personal archives) and the sources we do have are not equally distributed in terms of class, gender, ethnicity etc. Third, the interaction between the formal and informal political world is often staged and mediated, with the mass media playing a key role.

These challenges form the starting point for our summer school. In the first part you familiarize yourself with the key historiographical debates and theories on politics from below, democracy and political representation from a multidisciplinary perspective (history, philosophy, political science). The second part is dedicated to a discussion of recent research on citizen letters, petitions, protests and the mass media (printed press, radio, TV) with a focus on Western Europe. In the third and final part of the summer school you get acquainted and work with various sources and methods to write political history from below and get the opportunity to formulate or finetune your own research ideas in a collaborative setting. You can draw inspiration from ongoing research projects conducted by the tutors of this summer school in which they approach political history from below.

After completing this summer school you are able to

- Combine a philosophical, political scientific and historical approach to the topic
- Offer a conceptual and theoretical reflection on writing history from below
- Find and select sources and methods to explore political history ‘from below’

Mission Statement Research School Political History

The objectives of the Research School Political History are:

**Promoting the quality of research and (inter)national cooperation*

**Providing high quality training for PhD candidates and Research Master (RMA) students,
the next generation in political history*

**Providing a platform for and representation of political historians in the Netherlands and Flanders*

The Research School Political History is member of the Association for Political History

<https://onderzoekschoolpolitiekegeschiedenis.nl/>

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