



RESEARCH SCHOOL FOR POLITICAL HISTORY (RSPH) | ONDERZOEKSCHOOL POLITIEKE GESCHIEDENIS (OPG)

RMA training program 2025-2026

Introduction

The Research School for Political History (RSPH) aims to offer research master students in the history of politics and the political a high-quality training program supervised by some of the leading scholars in the field, working in the Low Countries.

The RSPH training program is open to all students enrolled in a research master in history at a Dutch university. Our courses are designed to complement and deepen the research master study program, focusing on the historiographical, thematic, conceptual and methodological aspects of political history.

The RSPH program brings you into contact with fellow research master students at other universities, with PhDs, junior and with senior researchers in the field of political history. It offers an excellent preparation if you are interested in writing a PhD dissertation and pursuing a career in political history.

The program of the RSPH for Research Master Students offers training in the following competencies:

- Knowledge of, and reflection on the current state and future of political history.
- Knowledge of current debates, theories, historiography and methodologies in political history and adjacent fields of research.
- Reflection on the position and characteristics of political history in interdisciplinary research cooperation.
- Methods and techniques of research in political history.
- Oral and written reporting and participation in academic, political and public debates.
- Skills in the use of heuristic tools and techniques as well as digital humanities.

This document contains all the necessary information about the courses on offer and how to register.

In addition to our RMA training program, research master students are warmly invited to take part in other activities organized by or in close cooperation with the RSPH, e.g. master classes, seminars and conferences. Stay informed of our activities by visiting our website or subscribing to our newsletter.

Come and join us!

How to register?

The RSPH program is open to all students enrolled in a research master history program at a Dutch university. Students need to register for the RSPH at the beginning of their research master program via the program director of their own Research Master program (who has to submit the names of registered students at the beginning of the academic year).

As registered student at the RSPH, we expect you to follow an individual program of 10 ECTS in total. If for any reason you wish to earn more (or less) credits, a specific arrangement can be made in consultation with the director of studies of the RSPH.

More details about the registration process will be made available later. If you already know which courses you wish to participate in, you can inform us via bureau@onderzoekschoolpolitiekegeschiedenis.nl

Credits and certificates

At the end of each course / summer school, participants will receive a certificate, specifying grades and credits that have been obtained. The courses have a basic study load of 5 ECTS, with a possible extension to 6 ECTS or reduction to 3 ECTS. Please indicate upon registration how much credit points you wish to obtain for each course / summer school. The requirements for the final assignments will be expanded accordingly.

By way of exception, an additional credit point can be earned by actively participating in and writing a report about a platform activity of the RSPH (e.g. the opening, a seminar, master class or conference). Reports can be published in our newsletter. In case you would like to contribute please send us a reasoned proposal via bureau@onderzoekschoolpolitiekegeschiedenis.nl.

Colonialism & Memory Wars ***Opening of the Academic year 2025-2026*** *Plenary meeting with keynote lecture*

Date	19 September 2025
Location	Allard Pierson, Amsterdam
Time	14.30 – 17.00 Plenary meeting

The theme of this year's opening is Colonialism & Memory Wars. Prof. dr. Gert Oostindie will deliver this year's keynote, in which he will explore the recent resurgence of interest in Dutch colonial history within Dutch society and politics.

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

Program schedule

Courses		Period	ECTS (optional)
c.1	What is Political History Today?	Feb-March 2026	5 (6)
c.2	Back to the source. Archival Research in the Digital Age	Apr-May 2026	5 (3)
c.3	Summer school: Writing (Past) Empires as National Histories	9-11 June 2026	5 (3)
Optional: active participation in a RSPH platform activity such as a workshop Nodegoat, Oral History, and a workshop audiovisual media and digital methods (1 EC; max. of 3 EC, see PhD training program)			



Working on poster presentations at the IISH, Summer School 2025

Course descriptions

C.1 What is Political History Today?

Supervisors: dr. David de Boer (Radboud University Nijmegen), Solange Ploeg (MPhil) (Radboud University Nijmegen), dr. Dries Raeymaekers (Radboud University Nijmegen)
Course period: January-March 2026 (6 meetings | Thursday afternoons: 29 January, 5, 12, 19, 26 February, 5 March 2026)
Location: Radboud University
Credits: 5 ECTS (6 is optional)
Registration: before 1 November 2025, via: bureau@onderzoekschoolpolitiekegeschiedenis.nl

Course description and learning goals

What is political history today? Among historians and social scientists, definitions of and approaches to political history have diverged immensely and continue to do so. In this course, students explore recent approaches relevant to the history of politics and discuss the ongoing conceptualization of politics and the political, as well as its consequences for methods and the study of source material. What is the current state of the art in both early modern and modern political history, and what remains to be explored?

Participants in this course will learn at RMA level:

- How to define and analyze recent key concepts and approaches in the history of politics and the political;
- How to evaluate political historical studies from a historiographical, theoretical and methodological perspective;
- How to employ key concepts in the analysis of sources for the study of the political history;
- How to discuss these matters with fellow students;
- How to write a paper in which these topics are further developed

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

We ask that students prepare questions, discussion points and analytical commentary on the readings and the discussion papers of the week. Participation will not be graded, but if you cannot make it to class, you are asked to notify the teaching staff well in advance.

C.2 Back to the Source: Archival Research in the Digital Age

Supervisors: dr. Marijke van Faassen, dr. Rik Hoekstra and dr. Marijn Koolen (Huygens Institute)
Dates: April-May 2026 (5 meetings | Thursday afternoons 16, 23, 30 April, 7 and 21 May 2026)
Location: Spinhuis Amsterdam
Credits: 5 ECTS (3 is optional)
Registration: Before 15 March 2026, via bureau@onderzoekschoolpolitiekegeschiedenis.nl

Course description and learning goals

Long gone are the days when political history was only described from official state documents. In today's historical practice, a great deal of attention is paid to multi-perspectivity, seeking opportunities to hear different voices. No one doubts the relevance of looking beyond the text and incorporating visual, auditory and material sources. In addition, new approaches and rapidly developing digital techniques shed fresh light on classical sources and open different possibilities for organizing, analysing and presenting sources on a larger scale. What does this mean for writing political history today?

In this course, students develop a broad view of the potential of resources to analyse the history of politics and the political. Students also learn to critically reflect on the limitations of various types of sources, archives, and datasets, and to recognize their 'political' nature. What were the roles of e.g. the state and social movements in collecting and archiving materials? What blank spots does this leave in the archives and analyses? Although Dutch archives are the starting point of this course, the literature and methodological analogue and digital skills are universally applicable.

Participants in this course will:

- Gain insight into a range of sources relevant to study political history;
- Reach a next level in source critique;
- Get acquainted with new technologies to access, comprehend, analyze and manage primary sources relevant to political historians;
- Obtain the skills to use various primary sources – both physical and digital – and apply methods in a sound way.

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

Requirements

- Specific requirements TBA
(you may expect weekly preparations, active participation, written reflections and a presentation to be part of the assessment)

C.3 Summer School: Writing (Past) Empires as National Histories: Legacies of Colonialism and Violence in the Netherlands and Germany – in an international comparative context

(Followed by the Association of Political History's international conference, "Dynamizing and Decentring Empires: A Recalibration of the History of the Political", Münster (D), 11-13 June 2026)

Supervisors: prof. dr. Jacco Pekelder (University of Münster)

Dates: 9-11 June 2026

Location: Münster

Credits: 5 ECTS (3 is optional)

In the academic year of 2025-2026 the RSPH Summer School will focus on how historians have been studying Dutch and German colonialism. Especially the interaction between historical narratives and societal and political dealings with the legacies of colonialism and, especially, experiences of violence in colonial contexts are discussed. Without claiming to name all aspects here, one question to be considered certainly is how the writing of specific colonial empires relates to the general analysis of submissive systems in international politics, in past and present. Another question regards the positionality of the author: can all historians study colonialism or should of them best avoid the topic? Related to that is the question if and how national histories, especially those told in schools and museums, must incorporate the colonial past. Must the state, i.e. must official history politics play a role, e.g. in efforts to create a new, or: postcolonial, national identity? Or should we rely on those in society who in a sense incorporate the legacies of former colonial bondage? Is it them who are best placed to voice the agency and imagination of the oppressed and their resistance?

To explore these questions in-depth and learn to work with them the 2026 Summer School invites its participants to dive into more recent developments in the Netherlands and Germany: pathbreaking research projects, controversial debates and the professional and/or moral dilemmas behind them – and compare these with international developments in the field.

The Summer School is combined with the Association of Political History's international conference, "Dynamizing and Decentring Empires: A Recalibration of the History of the Political", that will directly follow it, and will also take place in the historic city of Münster, Germany.

Requirements

- Specific requirements: TBA
You may expect assignments, active participation, written reflections and a presentation to be part of the assessment.