



The Betty Behrens Seminar on Classics of Historiography

The seminar offers a unique opportunity for students and scholars to reflect on great historical works and engage in discussion with renowned experts.

It will endeavour to underline the importance of the classics of historiography for their relevant intellectual function in creating critical political thought.

Classics



Annals
(114-120)
Publius Cornelius Tacitus



History of the Wars
(545-553)
Procopius of Caesarea



Histories of Scotland
(1578)
John Leslie



English History 1914-1945
(1965)
A.J.P. Taylor

Michaelmas Term 2024

Where

Richard Eden Suite, Clare Hall,
West Court, Cambridge

Speakers

ROLAND MAYER
Emeritus Professor of Classics, King's College London

PETER SARRIS
Professor of Late Antique, Medieval and Byzantine Studies
University of Cambridge

PAULINA KEWES
Professor of English Literature, University of Oxford

KATHLEEN BURK
Professor Emerita of Modern and Contemporary History
University College London

Convener

DAVIDE CAEDDU
Life Member and Associate, Clare Hall, Cambridge
Professor of History of Political Thought, University of Milan



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE



CLARE HALL
CAMBRIDGE

The Seminar

The seminar will take place between the 10th of October and the 21st of November 2024 and will be constituted of four biweekly meetings. The charming and fresh atmosphere of the Richard Eden Suite in Clare Hall, West Court, Cambridge, will be the location for the discussions.

How it works

Each meeting is composed of one hour and a half. The guest speaker will introduce the classic by talking for half an hour. After that, each participant may briefly express their understanding of the work by addressing some questions to the other participants and the guest speaker. In order to be ready for the dialogue, everyone might read some pages of the work under scrutiny.

The selection of pages is chosen by the guest speaker and is downloadable from the Clare Hall website: <https://www.clarehall.cam.ac.uk>

Lunch and refreshment

Before and during each seminar meeting, coffee and tea will be available. After each event, the participants will enjoy a further informal exchange of viewpoints over a glass of juice or wine.

How to sign up

There are a few posts available to guarantee the close dynamics of the discussion and the full involvement of the participants. Those interested can even apply for just one meeting.

To attend the seminar, please register via <https://the-betty-behrens-seminar-tickets.eventbrite.com>

For further information

davide.cadeddu@unimi.it

Program

Thursday
10 October 2024

4.15pm
Registration

4.30pm
Seminar
“Annals”
by Publius Cornelius Tacitus



ROLAND MAYER

Thursday
24 October 2024

4.15pm
Registration

4.30pm
Seminar
“History of the Wars”
by Procopius of Caesarea



PETER SARRIS

Thursday
7 November 2024

4.15pm
Registration

4.30pm
Seminar
“Histories of Scotland”
by John Leslie



PAULINA KEWES

Thursday
21 November 2024

4.15pm
Registration

4.30pm
Seminar
“English History 1914–1945”
by A.J.P. Taylor



KATHLEEN BURK

Purpose

The seminar offers a unique opportunity for students and scholars to reflect on several great historical works and engage in discussion with renowned experts.

As we know, a classic is recognized as such insofar as it retains its value as an intellectual and cognitive tool, helping us to gain an understanding of the past as well as the present from a particular cultural viewpoint. Classics still have the capacity to resonate and speak to us about current problems. They produce perspectives that are implicitly comparative and dynamic, thanks to the historical dimension passing through both them and us.

These considerations are even more relevant when we speak about the classics of historiography because the same historical dimension is present on several more levels. These classics challenge us to contemplate some historical problems which are only fully understood when properly contextualised. In the same way, even the classic itself can fruitfully produce its own intellectually provocative value when read through the eyes of the present but interpreted with a historicist approach.

The seminar will endeavour to underline the importance of the classics of historiography for their relevant intellectual function in creating critical political thought.