

Call for Papers

Beyond Eurocentrism in Intellectual History

Colloquium, 3-5 September 2020
UCL Institute of Advanced Studies, London

This colloquium is designed to discuss ideas and methods from intellectual histories outside of a European context, especially how they might stimulate new approaches in the discipline of intellectual history as constituted in the Western academy. We plan to bring together scholars working in and on different regions to start a conversation about how intellectual history is researched, taught and configured in different places, bringing into stark relief the politics of knowledge of the field. We hope that all intellectual historians, whatever their specific area of research, will be interested in joining us to rethink the endeavour of intellectual history in a global context.

Over the last few years, since the publication of Moyn and Sartori's landmark collection of essays *Global Intellectual History* (2013) and the launch of the journal *Global Intellectual History* (2016), there have been many discussions about the orientation and scope of this new perspective on the life of ideas. For all the strengths of these events and debates, more attention has been paid to the empirical implications of the term "global" – i.e., extending the reach of the subject to include the intellectual histories of Africa, Asia, Arabia, Latin America, or thinking about canonical Europeans in a wider transnational, trans-imperial or entangled context – than to the conceptual and methodological challenges posed to the whole field by a "global" approach to the study of ideas.

Such challenges include who intellectual historians recognise as thinkers, where they look for ideas, and how they analyse the effects of inequalities on intellectual life. If a lot of work has been done to deconstruct geo-political dualisms such as centre/periphery or metropole/colony, there are other dichotomies (arguably just as Eurocentric) that remain prevalent e.g. the assumed oppositions between ideas and practices, the universal and the local, or pure and applied knowledge. And changes in method that seem desirable in post-imperial societies may be deemed less so in post-colonial ones: for example, few Western historians accept diffusionism nowadays, but for some historians in other parts of the world it can be an explanation for colonial dispossession on an epistemological level. Now that more historians are exploring thought from a social history archive, or through material culture, by adopting ethnographic techniques or by 'provincializing' European thought, we convene this colloquium to debate the cumulative effects of these approaches on thinking about what intellectual history can be.

Themes and format

In order to orientate discussion in specific historical practice, the colloquium will focus on three themes: freedom, justice and sovereignty. We invite scholars to present research papers on these themes and/or that engage with the conceptual/methodological challenges posed by a global approach. We welcome proposals on any period and any region. We especially welcome papers that explore intellectual histories of areas of the world beyond Europe, or that adopt a global intellectual history approach to European thinkers.

The colloquium will open with a roundtable discussion on the theme “What does the ‘global’ bring to intellectual history?” and close with a roundtable on “Rethinking Epistemologies of Intellectual History”. In between there will be short presentations of papers, which will have been pre-circulated, in order to create plenty of time for engaged critical discussion.

We are delighted to confirm that Professor Herman Bennett, Professor of History at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, will be participating in the roundtable debates. He will also be giving a related lecture on Thursday 3 September, to which all participants in this colloquium will be invited. Prof. Bennett’s recent book, *African Kings and Black Slaves: Sovereignty and Dispossession in the Early Modern Atlantic*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019, speaks directly to the concerns of this colloquium.

Deadline for proposals:

Please send a title, a 500-word abstract and a brief (one-page) c.v., all in one document file, to Nicola.miller@ucl.ac.uk and c.ireton@ucl.ac.uk by **Friday 17th April 2020**. In your abstract, please make it clear how your paper relates to one of the themes or to the methodological and theoretical concerns of the colloquium. We hope to fund all successful applicants who lack institutional support to cover the cost of travel and accommodation: **please note in your submission whether you require funding to attend**.

Selected participants will be notified by Friday 1st May and will be asked to submit a work-in-progress research paper for pre-circulation by Friday 31st July 2020.

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This colloquium is sponsored by UCL Institute of Advanced Studies, The Centre for the Study of the History of Political Thought at Queen Mary, UCL History Department and others (forthcoming).