

Intellectuals and Politics; Historical and Sociological Perspectives

Conference at Selwyn College, Cambridge on 31 May 2019

The aim of this interdisciplinary conference is to bring together sociologists and intellectual historians to explore the intersection between intellectual life and political context.

Recently, there has been a growing convergence between intellectual history and the sociology of intellectuals. This convergence is intimately connected to two other developments. Firstly, recent historical research has increasingly taken on board developments in social theory. Secondly, the sociology of intellectuals has become more attuned to the rigours of empirical research as opposed to an earlier period where the aim was to develop broader theoretical perspectives.

The conference focuses on the intersection of the intellectual and political sphere and uses specific case-studies to tackle a variety of pressing questions, such as the following. Under what circumstances do political events shift intellectual currents? What might historical accounts of intellectuals operating in the political sphere have to teach sociologists? How might sociological analysis of these phenomena in turn enrich historical practice? What might a study of the historical role of intellectuals teach us about the place of intellectuals in contemporary political life? Can intellectual work escape the realm of politics, or are the two necessarily intertwined? Under what conditions might intellectuals transcend their class location and work towards more universal political goals?

Whilst drawing on historical case-studies, we will also bear in mind current issues. How have digital technologies and social media altered the role of the public intellectual? What are we to make of the increasing scepticism towards experts and expertise? What is the role of intellectuals in the context of populist politics?

Overall, the conference intends to forge new links, strengthen existing partnerships, and promote cross-fertilization of ideas across both disciplinary and national boundaries.

9:30am Registration

9:40am Welcome and introduction

By Patrick Baert

Professor of Social Theory at the University of Cambridge

9:45am Claude Lévi-Strauss; notre contemporain

By Emmanuelle Loyer

Professor of Contemporary History, Sciences Po.

10:45am Masked, Marked, Mapped: Giving Voice to 'Female Intellectuals'

By Véronique Mottier

Fellow at Jesus College, Cambridge, and Professor of Sociology, University of Lausanne

11:45am Coffee break

12pm Books that matter; the case of Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*

By Filipe Carreira da Silva

Fellow at Selwyn College, Cambridge, and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon

1pm Lunch break

2pm Intellectuals engaging the grassroots: from status to strategy in the Black Consciousness Movement.

By Marcus Morgan

Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Bristol

3pm How to become an Islamophobic dominant intellectual: the sociological conditions of Oriana Fallaci's enduring success.

By Tomasso Vitale

Associate Professor of Sociology, Sciences Po.

4pm Coffee break

4:20pm Bourdieu et l'internationalisation du champ intellectuel L'expérience de la revue *Liber*

By Christophe Charle

Professor of Contemporary History at the University of Paris – Panthéon Sorbonne.

Those interested in attending should contact Prof [Patrick Baert](#).