



# 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



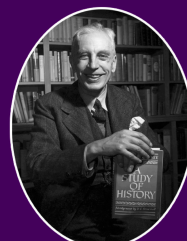
*Parallel Lives*  
Plutarch



*Florentine Histories*  
Niccolò Machiavelli



*The New Science*  
Giambattista Vico



*A Study of History*  
Arnold J. Toynbee

May  
2023

## Where

Richard Eden Suite, Clare Hall,  
West Court, Cambridge

## Speakers

**JUDITH MOSSMAN**

Professor of Classics, Coventry University

**JANE CAPLAN**

Emeritus Fellow, St Antony's College, Oxford

**JOHN ROBERTSON**

Professor Emeritus of the History of Political Thought  
University of Cambridge

**MAURIZIO VIROLI**

Professor Emeritus of Politics, Princeton University

## Convener

**DAVIDE CADEDDU**

Life Member, Clare Hall, Cambridge  
Professor of History of Political Theory, University of Milan



UNIVERSITY OF  
CAMBRIDGE



CLARE HALL  
CAMBRIDGE

## The Seminar

The seminar will take place between the 4th and 25th of May and will be constituted of four weekly 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 two hours. The guest speaker will introduce the classic by talking for half an hour. After that, each participant will 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 is asked to read about fifty 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 each seminar meeting, the Clare Hall dining hall will be available for lunch. 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 only twelve 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. In addition, there will be space for a good number of auditors.

To attend the seminar either as a participant or as an auditor, please register via <https://the-betty-behrens-seminar-tickets.eventbrite.com>

## For further information

[davide.cadeddu@unimi.it](mailto:davide.cadeddu@unimi.it)

## Program

**Thursday  
4 May 2023**

1.45pm  
Registration

2pm  
Seminar  
***"Parallel Lives"***  
(II c.)  
by **Plutarch**



JUDITH MOSSMAN

**Thursday  
11 May 2023**

1.45pm  
Registration

2pm  
Seminar  
***"A Study of History"***  
(1934-1961)  
by **Arnold J. Toynbee**



JANE CAPLAN

**Thursday  
18 May 2023**

1.45pm  
Registration

2pm  
Seminar  
***"The New Science"***  
(1725)  
by **Giambattista Vico**



JOHN ROBERTSON

**Thursday  
25 May 2023**

1.45pm  
Registration

2pm  
Seminar  
***"Florentine Histories"***  
(1532)  
by **Niccolò Machiavelli**



MAURIZIO VIROLI

## 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.



design by  
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