



Call for Papers

InterQueer: Crossing Queer and Intersectional Lenses in Historical Practice

(Padova, 29-30 January 2026)

The research groups **Queer and Feminist Studies** at the European University Institute and **Storie di Sessualità e Genere** at the University of Padua invite researchers to a two-day workshop aimed at fostering new reflections on queer and/or intersectional perspectives in historical research. The workshop seeks to critically discuss how tools, categories, and practices are shaped by heteronormative assumptions and the presupposition of fixed identities, and, conversely, how queer and intersectional approaches can help us to interpret the past in a fuller and more complex manner.

In recent decades, queer history and intersectional history have become increasingly established areas within historiography. Developing mainly from gay and lesbian studies (Halperin, 2002), queer history has questioned an identity-based, and genealogical approach that failed to reflect the fragmented, inconsistent and discontinuous nature of how a person perceives themselves within social and cultural networks (Doan, 2013; Amin, 2023). While still closely linked to the history of non-conforming genders and sexualities, the queer approach enables us to understand complex phenomena relating to the construction, performance and attachment of subjectivities to particular models or forms of the self (Gammerl, 2021; Saritaş, 2024).

In fact, some studies have shown how the flexibility of the queer approach can reveal dimensions that would otherwise remain invisible even when analysing historical phenomena that are far removed from the traditional field of investigation of queer history. Scholars have also demonstrated how queer lenses can uncover power dynamics within different political regimes, such as colonial settings (Camilleri and Fusari, 2022) or the development of participatory democracy in the second half of the 20th century (Huneke and Chin, 2025). These perspectives reveal how unstable conceptions of gender and sexuality highlight invisible and alternative historical processes.

Additionally, queer history has challenged linear temporal frameworks. By exploring the history of lesbianism, Tamara Chaplin (2024) has crafted an alternative chronology of modern France, showing 'queer touches' across time and space. Xavier Nunn, for example, has used queer history to explore forms of both resistance and complicity in the Nazi state, showing how 'liminality' unveils the incoherence of repressive regimes (Nunn, 2023). With a similar approach, Elissa Mailänder (2022) has emphasized the importance of moving beyond rigid

dichotomies in the study of Nazism, reflecting on how even marginalised queer individuals could have had privileges within Nazi society, thanks to their belonging to categories such as 'Aryan' or being male.

Similarly to queer perspectives, intersectionality did not originate in the field of historiography but is increasingly being taken up by historians (Silverstein, 2017; Nocera and Martinat, 2024). Coined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw to explain the discrimination of Black women in the context of legal cases, intersectionality has, for a long time, been used mostly within critical race theory and postcolonial approaches to current societies. Recent developments in historiography have highlighted that attending to the complexities of identity categories – often more local and varied than the triad of race, gender and class – enables historians to examine the intricate interplays of power and privilege (McCall, 2005).

The ductility of intersectional approaches has also complicated critical approaches to social and cultural phenomena by demonstrating how categories such as gender are embedded in processes of epistemological domination (Lugones, 2010, 2023) or by nuancing materialistic approaches to the study of class production (Bohrer, 2018). These analytical practices have been translated and expanded upon by scholars focusing on historical phenomena. Historian of sexuality Kirsten Leng has shown how queer disability studies help to re-interpret the history of modern sexology by highlighting the role of women sexologists in creating an ableist basis for sexual freedom (Leng, 2019).

At the same time, historians have warned how intersectionality, taken superficially as a view of individuals with certain 'attributes', reflects a colonialist worldview that 'theorises humans as deviations from a white, male, propertied, heterosexual, Protestant-but-secular individual' (D'Cruz et al., 2017). These scholars encourage historians to keep in sight how intersectionality was born from the specific context of Black African American feminist movements, and how it should be used as an instrument to confront power structures.

The overlaps between queer history and intersectionality have been particularly explored by scholars focusing on the histories of colonialism and racism. Todd Shepard has written a history of modern France and Algeria by examining how racialization and regimes of masculinity intersected, showing that the colonial order worked through gender and sexual imaginaries (Shepard, 2017). In the context of 20th-century Germany, Christopher Ewing has demonstrated how intersectional and queer perspectives can reveal fractures, forms of discrimination and power asymmetries within processes of sexual and gender emancipation (Ewing, 2024).

These are only some examples suggesting how we aim to explore the possible crossing between these two innovative fields of historical practice. The workshop aims to explore potential contact zones between these two approaches, or potential challenges to working with both, and to find out about their combined richness. We are particularly interested in critically engaging with queer and intersectional methodologies beyond Anglo-American arenas and in giving researchers the chance to apply innovative questions and methods to their own empirical research.

The workshop's primary objective is to stimulate methodological discussion and, through collective reflection, to begin theorising the interplay between queer and intersectional history. The workshop will be structured into three main parts:

- Two keynote lectures, delivered by **Valentina Fusari** (University of Turin) who is carrying out an ERC project on the Red Sea region to unpack the “mixedness” of unions and offspring since the 19th century; and **Régis Schlagdenhauffen** (École des Hautes études en Sciences Sociales, Paris) whose work investigates the social history of sexual categories in contemporary history.
- A presentation and discussion of participants’ case studies based on their research projects. Each presentation will last approximately 15 minutes, followed by comments from the two keynote speakers and a group discussion.
- At the end of the workshop, there will be an opportunity for collective reflection on key research categories and practices, with the aim of developing them into a methodological publication that brings together the selected case studies.

We invite scholars of early modern and modern history to submit proposals based on their empirical research which investigate the contributions of queer or intersectional historical approaches, or the intertwining of both. The call for papers is open to everyone, but early career scholars are particularly encouraged to apply.

Please send a proposal of a maximum of 500 words and a short bio to interqueer.padova@gmail.com by **November 28, 2025**. Paper drafts will be pre-circulated two weeks before the workshop to foster in person discussion and exchange. **While, for practical reasons, English will be the language of discussion during the workshop, we also welcome contributions in other languages, as long as arrangements can be made to provide listeners with a written translation at the time of presentation.**

The workshop will be held at the **University of Padua** (DEPARTMENT OF HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHIC SCIENCES AND THE ANCIENT WORLD- Dissgea) on **January 29-30, 2026**.

We may be able to partially fund researchers who cannot otherwise receive funding to attend the workshop. Please specify in your application if you need a bursary, for what reason, and to cover what costs.

We are looking forward to welcoming researchers in Padua!

Organizing committee

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