

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INTERDEPENDENCE

WOMEN IN THE PAST, THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE OF THE UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY OF PADUA
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
22-24 SEPTEMBER 2021

In view of the celebrations of the 800th anniversary of the University of Padua in 2022, the 'Elena Cornaro' Centre for gender studies, cultures and politics organizes an international conference around the urgent issues of 'equality' and 'diversity', with a focus on the histories and the roles of women in the university, as well as on the question whether the relationships of power that have long governed academic institutions may in time give way to relations of 'interdependence'.

The conference opens on the afternoon of Wednesday, September 22nd, with the timely presentation of the volume *L'università delle donne. Accademiche e studentesse dal Seicento a oggi*, edited by cultural historian Carlotta Sorba, which offers a welcome introduction to the themes discussed in the following two days. The book is part of a new series of works on the eight-century-long life of the University of Padua, titled *Patavina Libertas*, which firmly sets our institution in a European context.

On Thursday 23rd September, the working sessions are devoted to making visible and to comparing the varied histories of women's access to and presence in academic institutions in Italy and in Europe, and to asking how a history of women in the university should be written today. Historians, as well as historians of science, arts and literature, and media are particularly welcome to contribute (see the first part of the CfP below).

The second part of the conference, on Friday 24th September, looks to the present and the future of women in the university, from the perspective of the unprecedented challenges posed by the current pandemic and of the possibilities of transformation that it may open (see the second part of the CfP below).

The post-pandemic university of tomorrow will not be the same reality we have known so far. The trials we face are unprecedented, and so are the chances of renewal. We therefore invite you to work towards an innovative vision of the relationship between knowledge(s), cultures and policies for our universities, which takes into account and enhances the contributions of feminist thinking and gender studies.

conference convener

Annalisa Oboe

Centro di Ateneo Elena Cornaro per i saperi, le culture e le politiche di genere

www.centroelenacornaro.unipd.it

CALL FOR PAPERS
(part one)

WOMEN ACADEMICS AND STUDENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY: HISTORICAL APPROACHES

How should a history of women's presence in the university be written today? In order to answer this question, we still need more in-depth studies and new perspectives, which may reveal the specificities, timings, trajectories of women's university and academic careers in a wide geographical and chronological framework. The aim should be that of constructing a narrative in which cultural, social, economic and institutional elements interact with each other.

Existing studies have provided some relevant observations: they tell us, for example, that it was not a linear story, characterised by different phases and consistent returns; that it was and in part still is an obstacle course; and that it is a narrative in which the constant tension between discrimination and distinction, between separation and integration, between gendered norms and strategies of emancipation must be considered.

The purpose is not only to shed light on the progressive 'addition' of women, but also to identify how their access and contribution have changed both institutions and disciplinary fields.

This call is addressed to historians, as well as to historians of science, arts and literature, and media. The selected candidates (PhD students and post-docs are welcome) will have the opportunity to present their paper the first day of the conference, that aims to promote a transdisciplinary dialogue between historiography and a variety of scientific fields.

Proposals should explore specific national case studies or adopt a comparative or a transnational approach. Our priority is to focus on the dynamics that characterised the 19th and the 20th centuries, but proposals investigating early pioneering experiences are also welcome.

The expected contributions may deal with one of these following issues:

- History and representations of female students (e.g. experiences inside and outside the university; their cultural representations; their social and economic backgrounds; their relationship with male students; their scientific and social networks; the impact on the history of specific faculties and/or departments; their approach to politics, political parties and/or movements like student movements, feminism, ecologist movements, etc.)
- Women and knowledge in academia (e.g. strategies and choices of women in academia; biographical paths and impact on different area of studies; processes of acquiring scientific and intellectual legitimacy; cultural representation in the media, relationship with male counterparts, etc.)

The scientific committee will support in particular proposals that privilege social and cultural approaches, adopting sources such as journals and memoirs, biographies, PhD dissertations, grey literature, oral sources, visual documentation, etc., as well as sources more commonly used in the history of universities (statistical sources, reports of Academic Boards etc.).

CALL FOR PAPERS
(part two)

WHAT SORT OF EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY (FOR HARD TIMES AND FUTURE TIMES)?

The university today, and the one that will follow the pandemic crisis, is not and will not be the same reality we have known so far. The challenges we face are unprecedented; and so are the possibilities of transformation.

Over the last year and a half, many voices of women, groups and networks have invited us – in Italy and internationally – to finally acknowledge the plurality of competences, experiences and needs of women, in all their complexity and diversity, with a careful look at the phenomena of marginality, exclusion, invisibility, violence and inequality related to gender, which still characterize our society and its institutions, and which have increased enormously during the pandemic. This is not a new request: women have struggled and posed the same questions over and over again and for a long time, but although progress has been made, the present moment seems to represent a watershed.

Because these voices have asked us to think of the current crisis not only as a health, social and economic crisis, but also as a 'crisis of care', which has put into question welfare policies, highlighted unequal relations and relations of exploitation in human societies and between these and the planet.

These voices ask all of us (people of all genders) to take upon ourselves the responsibility of 'taking care'. Taking care of people, institutions, societies and the environment today appears as a necessary policy and action. It means to radically recognize the interdependencies that affect us all.

Is this an ethical/political narrative of transformation that might involve and open up academic institutions? Would it represent a process towards equity through an embrace of diversity? Is acknowledging the connectedness and interdependence of different ways of knowing, of teaching, of relating to each other the route to a fairer, more creative and fruitful university environment?

We welcome proposals (maximum length: 500 words) for 20-mins papers addressing the following main topics, where GENDER is used in the most inclusive sense of the term and in an intersectional analytical frame:

- Gender and the production of knowledge
- Gender and innovation
- Gender and sustainability
- Gender and violence in universities
- Gender and social justice
- Gender, academic communities and interdependence
- Gender equality, leadership and the future of the university

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All proposals for twenty-minute papers and for 10-mins statements, accompanied by a short bio, should be sent in English to centro.elenacornaro@unipd.it by **15 July 2021** (deadline).

Acceptance of proposals will be communicated by **20 August 2021**.