



Republican Political Practices in Medieval Europe
November 11 – 14, 2017
Venice International University
Isola di San Servolo, Venice

VIU Autumn School

**Republican Political
Practices in Medieval
Europe**

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University

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Scientific Coordinator:

Alexei Vovin,
European University at
Saint Petersburg (EUSP)

The school focus is related to a new strong historiographical trend in medieval studies. Namely, this is a reexamination of “republican” or “democratic” tendencies within the medieval society. The Autumn School’s general aim is to bring together the scholars who concentrate on horizontal political ties within the medieval society.

Traditionally, the “democratic” tendency was described in historical scholarship as an extremely vertical one, where a feudal hierarchy prevailed upon the horizontal ties. Thus, in the second half of the twentieth century the elitist research paradigm focused mostly on the land-endowed nobility. Arnold Esch argued that such a focus is nothing but a result of source base state, in which land acts that have survived in the Church archives prevailed. However, that testifies only to the better preservation of the church archives. Ignoring this fact, we risk making the Middle Ages even more agrarian and even more religious than they really were.

However, in the 1980s a new historiographical tendency has appeared, that focused on various republican political practices, such as public deliberation and acclamation. In the perspective of this new trend, even a church inner life appeared to be deeply rooted in collective action and decision-making. After a new political self-government reality – an urban commune had appeared in the eleventh century, republican practices started to flourish. Codified law replaced the brutal force and the legal custom as the main means of regulation of social relations. At the same time, the law-making itself became a task for those to whom these laws applied, and the community of citizens directly involved in the decision-making became a political actor claiming at least legal autonomy, or even a political independence. That was exactly a “Liberty of the Ancients” that Benjamin Constant wrote about, contrasting it with “Liberty of the Moderns.” However, the latter would be impossible without the former, to which it gave birth. The Modern Time and its ideas did not appear out of nowhere. It was urban communes that rediscovered Antiquity, looking for new legal forms. Thus, the routes of modernity are closely connected to the horizontal practices of the Middle Ages. Machiavelli and Montesquieu cannot be imagined without comprehending the republican experience of Florence, Venice and other medieval communes. The communal

development created a new society where a man, his rights and property were protected by a codified law. Therefore, it is evident why we consider Venice as symbolically the best place in the world for a discussion about medieval republicanism.

The Autumn School focuses on urban and countryside communes, first forms of proto-parliaments (like *Etats Généraux* in France), Orders of Knighthood, universities and other self-governing and autonomous societies in this period. The main school themes are political practices: public deliberation, voting, selection by lot, direct political participation, as well as republican notions in the texts written before 1500 A.D.: *virtus, res publica, libertas and dignitas*. Medieval republicanism will be discussed also in its connection to the past and to the future. In our proposed program the following questions will be discussed: can one consider medieval practical republicanism a heritage of Antiquity or not? How did it contribute to the further development of republican theory and practices in the Modern time?

Who is it for?

Master and PhD students are welcome to participate: they are encouraged to present their own topics.

Faculty

Alexei Vovin, European University at St. Petersburg, Russia

Wim Blockmans, University of Leiden, Netherlands

Pavel Lukin, Russian Academy of Sciences/ European University at St. Petersburg, Russia

Ekaterina Nosova, Russian Academy of Sciences

Anti Selart, Tartu University, Estonia

Lorenzo Tanzini, Università' di Cagliari, Italy

Program

Republican Forms of Medieval Europe

Wim Blockmans

On the Italian urban communal liberties

Lorenzo Tanzini

The West and the East of Europe: Similarities and Differences

Anti Selart, Pavel Lukin, Alexei Vovin

Ideals of Brotherhood in Chivalric Orders

Ekaterina Nosova

Workshop

The faculty participants and graduate students will present papers on their particular topics

Application procedure and cost

Fees:

Students of VIU member universities:
No participation fees.

Students of other universities:
€ 200 incl. VAT

The fees will cover tuition, course materials, accommodation in multiple rooms at the VIU campus, lunches in the VIU cafeteria and social events.

Student participants will be responsible for covering their own travel expenses to and from Venice, local transportation and evening meals. The School will provide a limited number of travel grants for participants from VIU member universities.

On-line application

Available from July 28, 2017 on the VIU website.

Applicants must submit the application form, a letter of motivation – which should include a brief description of the candidate's research interests, a curriculum vitae and a photo.

Application deadline: September 4, 2017

Admitted candidates will be notified by September 11, 2017.

Credits

Number of ECTS credits allocated: 2.

A certificate of attendance will be issued at the end of the course.

The campus of Venice International University is located on the island of San Servolo, in Venice.



Venice International University (VIU) is a global consortium of seventeen universities with an autonomous campus on the island of San Servolo, Venice, Italy.

The mission of VIU is to foster cooperation among VIU member institutions while facilitating the exchange of knowledge and ideas.



Venice International University

Isola di San Servolo

30133 Venice, Italy

T +39 041 2719511

F +39 041 2719510

E summerschools@univiu.org

www.univiu.org