

Young History Researchers Summer School: Understanding emotions and feelings in History

- **Location:** Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Coimbra, Portugal
- **Date:** 10 and 11 July 2025

We are thrilled to announce our upcoming Summer School dedicated to exploring the dynamic and rapidly evolving field of the history of emotions. This interdisciplinary area of study has gained significant momentum in recent decades, offering fresh perspectives on how historical actors experienced and expressed their feelings, and how emotions have shaped historical events, processes, and narratives. The Summer School aims to provide a platform for emerging scholars to engage with cutting-edge research, fostering interdisciplinary dialogue and new perspectives on historical understanding.

The history of emotions emerged as a distinct field in the 1980s and 1990s, building upon earlier works in social and cultural history that touched on emotional aspects of human experience. Pioneering scholars such as Peter and Carol Stearns introduced the concept of 'emotionology' in their seminal work, defining it as "the attitudes or standards that a society, or a definable group within a society, maintains toward basic emotions and their appropriate expression." This work laid the foundation for a more systematic approach to studying emotions in historical contexts.

The field gained further momentum in the 1990s and early 2000s with contributions from scholars across various disciplines. Historians like William Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, and Ute Frevert began to develop new theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches for understanding emotions in history. Reddy's concept of 'emotional regimes' and Rosenwein's 'emotional communities' have become influential tools for analyzing how societies and groups have historically regulated, expressed, and valued different emotions.

As the field has matured, it has increasingly incorporated insights from anthropology, psychology, neuroscience, and cultural studies. This interdisciplinary approach has created a rich tapestry of methodologies and perspectives for understanding emotions in historical contexts. The "affective turn" in the humanities and social sciences has further emphasized the centrality of emotions in human experience and social life, leading to a proliferation of studies exploring the emotional dimensions of historical phenomena.

Current research trends in the field include the study of emotional regimes and communities, emotional practices, spaces of emotion, emotions and power, global and comparative approaches, emotions and the body, and emotions in material and visual culture. Researchers are exploring how societies and groups have historically regulated, expressed, and valued different emotions, applying these frameworks to a wide range of historical contexts, from medieval monastic communities to modern political movements. Recent studies have examined topics such as honor and shame in modern German history, the history of compassion, and how emotional practices shaped and were shaped by changing social and economic conditions.

The spatial dimensions of emotional experience have also gained attention, with scholars examining how different environments and landscapes have shaped emotional responses throughout history. This spatial turn has led to fascinating studies on topics such as the emotional geographies of colonialism, the affective dimensions of urban planning, and the role of emotions in shaping perceptions of natural environments.

The role of emotions in shaping political movements, revolutions, and power structures is another growing area of interest. Scholars are increasingly recognizing the central role of emotions in political life, exploring topics such as the emotional dynamics of protest movements, the use of emotions in political rhetoric, and the role of affect in shaping national identities.

As the field matures, there is a push towards more global and comparative studies of emotions across cultures and time periods. This global turn has led to exciting comparative studies and has encouraged scholars to question the universality of emotional concepts and experiences. Researchers are also turning their attention to the material and visual dimensions of emotional history, including studies of how emotions have been represented in art, literature, and popular media, as well as investigations into the emotional significance of objects and material culture.

Studying emotions in history presents unique methodological challenges. Scholars have developed various approaches to address these challenges, including textual analysis, visual and material culture analysis, quantitative methods, and interdisciplinary collaborations. The importance of reflexivity is emphasized, acknowledging how our own emotional experiences and cultural contexts shape our interpretations of historical emotions.

As the field continues to evolve, several exciting directions and emerging topics are being explored. These include the relationship between emotions and technology throughout history, the intersection of emotions and environmental history, the connections between sensory experiences and emotions, the role of emotions in shaping collective memory and historical narratives, and the study of digital emotions in the contemporary world.

We invite young researchers to submit papers exploring these and related topics for our Summer School. Possible areas of focus include emotional responses to major historical events, the history of specific emotions in different cultures and periods, emotions in historical texts and their interpretation, the intersection of emotions with gender, class, race, and religion, methodological approaches to studying emotions in historical sources, the role of emotions in memory and the construction of historical narratives, emotions and the body in history, the history of childhood emotions, comparative studies of emotions across cultures or historical periods, emotions in political and social movements, the emotional dimensions of colonialism and postcolonialism, emotions and the history of sexuality, and the role of emotions in economic history and consumer culture.

We encourage submissions that engage critically with existing historiography, introduce novel methodological approaches, or explore understudied emotional phenomena or historical periods. The summer school will feature keynote lectures by leading scholars in the field, workshops on methodological approaches, and ample opportunity for discussion and networking among participants.

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- Emotional responses to major historical events (e.g., wars, revolutions, pandemics, technological changes)
- The history of specific emotions (e.g., love, fear, anger, nostalgia) in different cultures and periods
- The intersection of emotions with gender, class, race, and religion in historical contexts
- Comparative studies of emotions across cultures or historical periods
- The emotional dimensions of colonialism and postcolonialism

Organizing Committee:

- Carlos Fernando Teixeira Alves (CHSC da U. Coimbra);
- Carolina Henriques Pereira (CHSC da U. Coimbra);
- Diana Tavares da Silva (CHSC da U. Coimbra);
- Guilherme Miguel Mendes de Sousa (CHSC da U. Coimbra)
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