

Call for Papers/Expressions of Interest for a Planning & Scoping Meeting: 'Human Rights: A Longer History'

Sponsored and supported by the ARC network for Early European Research and the State Library of Victoria

Professor Michael Bennett of the University of Tasmania and Dr. Jason Taliadoros of Monash University are co-convening a Planning & Scoping Meeting '**Human Rights: A Longer History**' to take place on 9 and 10 October 2009 at the State Library of Victoria, Melbourne. This meeting, sponsored by the ARC network for Early European Research (NEER) and hosted by the State Library of Victoria, aims to draw together both NEER and non-NEER specialists and scholars.

A great deal of the scholarship on human rights is resolutely a-historical. Books on human rights often begin with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, with only cursory nods back to 1789 and 1776, and perhaps a genuflection to the classical world. In so doing, they largely ignore the important and crucially formative intellectual and political engagements with such issues in Europe between the twelfth and eighteenth centuries, and indeed the formidable, if somewhat patchy and highly specialised, scholarship on them.

Further, while the concept of 'human rights' is a commonplace in contemporary mainstream and academic discourse, much of this is abstract and theoretical. Crucial to the approach taken at this event, in contrast, will be a focus on the practical aspects of human rights. First, from a pedagogical perspective, what are the significant moments in our 'longer history' that students need to engage with in order to satisfy learning objectives requiring a broad understanding of the changing concepts of rights over time, whether by evolution or historical contingency? Second, to what extent are these 'moments' explicable or informed by concerns of immediate pragmatism or praxis, rather than discourses merely of an abstract nature?

In light of these concerns, this proposed two-day event has the following aims:

- (a) to focus on European traditions of rights from the Middle Ages through to the eighteenth century;

- (b) to explore the value and viability of such a component in a longer history of human rights;
- (c) to seek opportunities for collaboration in research and research grant applications; and
- (d) to plan a significant interdisciplinary conference/symposium in 2010 with the title '**Human Rights: A Longer History**', and other future events.

The event seeks to involve specialists from NEER as well as scholars with a broader perspective and experience in the field of human rights, with the aim of achieving a constructive dialogue and balance between the two. Accordingly there will be presentations from:

- (a) medievalists and early modernists interested in the field of 'human rights' (or less anachronistically, individual and group rights);
- (b) academics with real experience of teaching histories of human rights, albeit mainly in relation to the twentieth century; and
- (c) senior scholars in human rights who could help clarify where the above two categories of academics could usefully contribute.

Confirmed participants so far include: Constant Mews (Monash University); Cary Nederman (Texas A & M); Megan Cassidy-Welch (University of Melbourne); Conal Condren (University of New South Wales/Queensland); David Garrioch (Monash University); and Patrick Emerton (Monash University).

If you are interested in presenting to, or simply attending, this forum, please contact the convenors, Professor Michael Bennett at Michael.Bennett@utas.edu.au or Dr. Jason Taliadoros at Jason.Taliadoros@arts.monash.edu.au. It is expected that a registration fee will be chargeable at a rate to cover expenses, although a discount will apply to full-time enrolled postgraduates.