

USES OF HISTORICAL NARRATIVES

in medieval preaching
(XII^e - XV^e centuries)



Jean Gerson (1363-1429): Sermons sur la Passion.
Bibliothèque municipale de Valenciennes, manuscrit n° 230, folio 57r.

Organized by Cécile Barluet (Université Paris Nanterre)
and François Wallerich (FNRS - Louvain-La-Neuve)

If you would like to join either of the two days online, please write to the following email addresses and we will send you a link:
barluetc@parisnanterre.fr (for 9 October 2025) / francois.wallerich91@orange.fr (for 5 February 2026).

The topos of "history as teacher of life" (*historia magistra vitae*), inherited from Cicero, illustrates the moral and exemplary character that history was expected to embody in the eyes of many medieval historiographers. It also explains why, conversely and quite naturally, discourses seeking to provide models, such as medieval sermons, made use of historical narration.

The aim of this conference is therefore to examine the uses of these historical narratives during the late Middle Ages, as well as their construction and interpretation according to the objectives pursued. Through the analysis of the working tools of preachers: *exempla* collections, *artes praedicandi*, historical works, as well as the training they received in the *studia*, schools, or universities, we will seek to understand how this historical culture was placed at the service of guiding the faithful.

Thursday 9 October 2025 - Paris Nanterre University (Max Weber Building)

10:00–12:30

Welcome coffee
from 9:30 a.m.

Cécile Barluet et François Wallerich - *Introduction*.

Alexander Marx (Institute for Medieval Research, Austrian Academy of Sciences) - "*The Roman Conquest of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.: A Pivotal Historical Episode in Medieval Sermons (c.800-c.1200)*".

Christian Grasso (Istituto storico Italiano per il Medioevo) - "*Histoire sainte et histoire profane dans la prédication de la croisade*".

14:00–17:30

Cécile Caby (Sorbonne Université) - "*L'histoire au secours de la réforme des ordres religieux : sondages dans les sermons capitulaires au XVe siècle*".

Maxime Arcelin (Université de Fribourg - Sorbonne Université) - "*À la recherche de récits historiques dans les sermons-modèles. Le cas des dominicains siennois de la fin du XVe siècle*".

Alexis Charansonnet (Université Lumière Lyon II) - "*Bible et histoire : l'exégèse politique dans la prédication d'Eudes de Châteauroux*".

Sophie Delmas (Université Lumière Lyon II) - "*Pierre Bersuire et les leçons de l'histoire*".

Session Chairs : **Matthieu Rajohnson, Cédric Giraud, Franck Collard**

Thursday 5 February 2026 - UCL, Louvain-la-Neuve (MORE 74 Lecture Hall)

9:30–12:30

Welcome coffee
from 9:00 a.m.

Jussi Hanska (Tampere University) - "*Good Emperor and Bad Emperor: Augustus and Nero as exemplary figures in medieval preaching*".

Antoine Brix (Université Grenoble Alpes) - "*L'urgence du passé dans le sermonnaire de Jean Bernier de Fayt : histoires païenne et chrétienne chez un bénédictin du XIVe siècle*".

Ralf Lützel Schwab (Freie Universität Berlin) - "*Les fourmis au service de l'observance dominicaine : Johannes Niders Formicarius et ses Exempla*".

Pietro Delcorno (Università di Bologna) - "*Francis, Dominic and the three spares: an exemplum between history and eschatology*".

14:30–17:30

Rosa Maria Dessì (Université Côte d'Azur) - "*Nicolas de Cues et le conflit avec l'abbesse Verena de Stuben : prédication et images*".

Pavel Soukup (Centre for Medieval Studies, Institute of Philosophy, Czech Academy of Sciences) - "*Bohemian History in Sermons from the Hussite Period*".

Nora Berend (Cambridge University) - "*Sermons et discours de Nicolas de Cues et de Pie II dans le contexte du conflit avec Sigismond, duc d'Autriche, et l'abbesse Verena de Stuben*".

Nicole Bériou (Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres) - *Conclusion*.

Session Chairs : **Xavier Hermand, Paul Bertrand, Svetlana Yatsyk**