

CALL FOR PAPERS

**Political Culture and the History of Knowledge: Actors, Institutions, Practices**

Conference at the German Historical Institute Washington DC, June 6-8, 2019

*Conveners:*

German Historical Institute Washington DC: Kerstin von der Krone, Simone Lässig

Center "History of Knowledge" at the University Zurich and the ETH Zurich:  
Kijan Espahangizi, Nils Güttler, Monika Wulz

Institute of the Formation of Knowledge at the University of Chicago: Shadi Bartsch-Zimmer

Knowledge is omnipresent yet its value is increasingly being called into question. Amid the flood of information disseminated by social media, amid talk of "fake news" and "alternative facts," expertise is subject to challenges from many directions. These developments make the *history* of knowledge especially relevant today. They also make politics and political culture an ideal test case for assessing the potential and limits of the history of knowledge. Knowledge plays an important role in political activities from voter mobilization to governmental decision-making. As recent historical research on the role of expert knowledge has shown, the political realm functions as a knowledge space – a space where knowledge is gathered, produced, disseminated, manipulated, and regulated. By investigating the role of knowledge in politics, the proposed conference will seek to foster a transatlantic debate on the merits of using knowledge as a category of historical analysis; in particular, it aims to initiate a productive conversation between scholars working in the "history of knowledge" paradigm and scholars in other fields – such as political history, cultural history, and intellectual history – who are open to and curious about using knowledge as a category of analysis.

The conference will explore the role of knowledge in different sectors, institutions, and agents of political life, including the state, the economy, the legal system, the public and the media, political parties, social movements, universities and think tanks. Possible subjects to be investigated from a knowledge perspective include: classic topics of political history (including ethno-nationalism, populism, elections and the electorate); the role of political culture and cultural policy; political symbols and languages; public opinion and the media; biopolitics, medicine, and environmental policy; migration and mobility. However, themes and topics are by no means restricted to these examples.

To foster a broad dialogue on the merits of knowledge as an analytical category we would like to invite scholars from political history, intellectual history, cultural history, media studies, anthropology, the history of science and technology, political science, sociology, or related fields to submit proposals. We aim for an empirically informed dialogue and prefer historical case studies that speak to knowledge as a category of historical analysis. Focused theoretical contributions discussing or comparing the approach, however, are also welcome especially if they are grounded in empirical work. While the conference seeks to bring into conversation the different historiographical approaches prevalent in Europe and North America, the thematic scope of the conference is not limited to these regions and will range from early modern to contemporary history. In order to leave plenty of time for comment and discussion, we are asking participants to prepare papers not exceeding twenty minutes.

Please send your one-page abstract of no more than 400 words and a short CV of no more than 2 pages in one combined PDF-file to the GHI's event coordinator Susanne Fabricius ([fabricius@ghi-dc.org](mailto:fabricius@ghi-dc.org)) by **June 30th, 2018**. For questions regarding possible contributions, please contact Dr. Kerstin von der Krone ([krone@ghi-dc.org](mailto:krone@ghi-dc.org)). We will notify applicants by the end of October 2018 and expect to be able to cover the transportation and accommodation costs of the conference participants.