

WORKSHOP - MAY 21-22, 2026

POLITICAL ECONOMY BEYOND POLITICAL ECONOMISTS:
UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL ECONOMY IN ACTION
(1700-1840)

PROGRAMME
UNIMAIL ROOM M6220



Between the end of the XVIIIth century and the middle of the XIXth century, mounting interimperial rivalries and major economic changes (i.e., the industrial revolution) intertwined with a growing formalization of scientific knowledge and, more specifically, the emergence of political economy.

In 1776, Adam Smith famously characterised political economy as “a branch of the science of a statesman or legislator” that aims “to enrich both the people and the sovereign”. However, the role of economists and the subject of their study were still very much undefined at the time. On the one hand, economics as a distinct academic discipline had yet to emerge, and the boundaries with other fields of knowledge such as moral philosophy, natural sciences, or political theology were unclear. On the other hand, discussions of provocative ideas about the origins of wealth, the regulation of markets and freedom of trade were not restricted to closed intellectual circles.

Even though most of early economic debate took place beyond elite intellectual and political spheres, this significant yet elusive portion of economic thinking has largely escaped the attention of conventional histories of political economy. It is only in recent years that a growing stream of research has examined the emergence of economic discourse beyond the scope of prominent figures who came to define the trajectories of modern economic debates.

Building on these innovative approaches, the workshop aims to bring together historians who are working on the nexus between economic discourses and material practices in science, government, trade, manufacturing and agriculture. In studying “political economy in action”, the workshop focuses on neglected actors who intervened in this emerging field of political economy. By bridging the gap between economic discourses and practices, it features new ways to study economic discourse, and to suggest what types of economic arguments played a role in reshaping economic and social practices.

DAY 1 – THURSDAY 21 MAY 2026

15.30 Welcome Coffee

INTRODUCTION

16.00-16.30 - *Studying Political Economy in Action*

Lorenzo Avellino (Université de Genève – The Fabric of Profit)

Jean-Baptiste Vérot (Université Marie & Louis Pasteur – Centre Lucien Febvre)

SESSION 1 - Freedom, Regulation & The State

16.30-17.00 - *Unions for Manufacturers? The role of employment and textile manufacturing in Anglo-Scottish and Anglo-Irish Union, 1688-1720*

Hugo Bromley (University of Cambridge – Centre for Geopolitics)

17.00-17.30 - *Global Trade, Smuggling, and the Making of Economic Liberalism: Asian Textiles in France 1680–1760*

Felicia Gottmann (Northumbria University)

17.30-18.00 - *The Estates of Languedoc and the governance of the woollen industry in Languedoc (1682–1789)*

Flavian Minel (Université Jean Moulin Lyon 3)

KEYNOTE

18.15-18.30 - *Introduction*

Mary O’Sullivan (Université de Genève – The Fabric of Profit)

18.30-20.00 - *The Limits of Mercantilism*

Julian Hoppit (University College London)

20.15 Dinner

DAY 2 – FRIDAY 22 MAY 2026

SESSION 2 : Political Economy From Below

09.00-09.30 - *The economic turn in the scope of social conflict: Lyon and the physiocratic roots of the labour movement*
Antoine Ropion (Université Lumière Lyon 2)

09.30-10.00 - *“Dans les grosses fermes tout se fait à la hâte”. The Political Economy of Agronomic Innovation in Late Eighteenth-Century France*
Aris Della Fontana (Université Paris Nanterre – Institut des sciences sociales du politique)

10.00-10.30 - *“Let Each Speak Only of What he Knows”: Contesting Political Economy in early republican Latin America (Buenos Aires, 1810-1834)*
Tomas Viera (Universidad de Buenos Aires)

10.30-10.45 Coffee break

SESSION 3 : New Sources for the History of Political Economy

10.45-11.15 - *Corporate Privileges : a Way to Investigate Political Economy in Action ?*
Vincent Demont (Université Paris Nanterre – Institutions et dynamiques historiques de l'économie et de la société)
Pauline Lemaigre-Gaffier (Université Paris Saclay – Institut d'études culturelles et internationales)

11.15-11.45 - *Political Economy and Beyond: Petitions in the Dutch Republic and its colonies*
Joris Van den Tol (Radboud University)

11.45-12.15 - *Translating Planter Political Economy. Pierre Joseph Laborie's The Coffee Planter (1798) and the Caribbean Origins of Second Slavery*
Giulio Talini (Università degli Studi di Torino – Fondazione 1563)

12.15-13.00 Lunch

SESSION 4 : Intersections of Theory and Practice

13.15-13.45 - *Political economy, economic expertise and policy making in France (1750-1789)*

Loïc Charles (Université Paris 8)

13.45-14.15 - *"He makes trade his religion": Josiah Tucker and the merchants of Bristol (1749-1799)*

Karim Ghorbal (Université Rennes 2)

14.15-14.45 - *Concepts and Practice of State Intervention in Sismondi's European Network of Correspondents, 1799-1842*

Gaïa Valenti (Université de Genève - The Fabric of Profit)

14.45-15.00 Coffee break

SESSION 5 : Mobilising Knowledge for Economic Improvement

15.00-15.30 - *Political Economy in the Field: Natural History, Agricultural Practice, and Economic Reasoning in Northern Italy between the Age of Enlightenment and the Napoleonic Era*

Luciano Maffi (Università degli Studi di Parma)

Martino Lorenzo Fagnani (Università di Pavia)

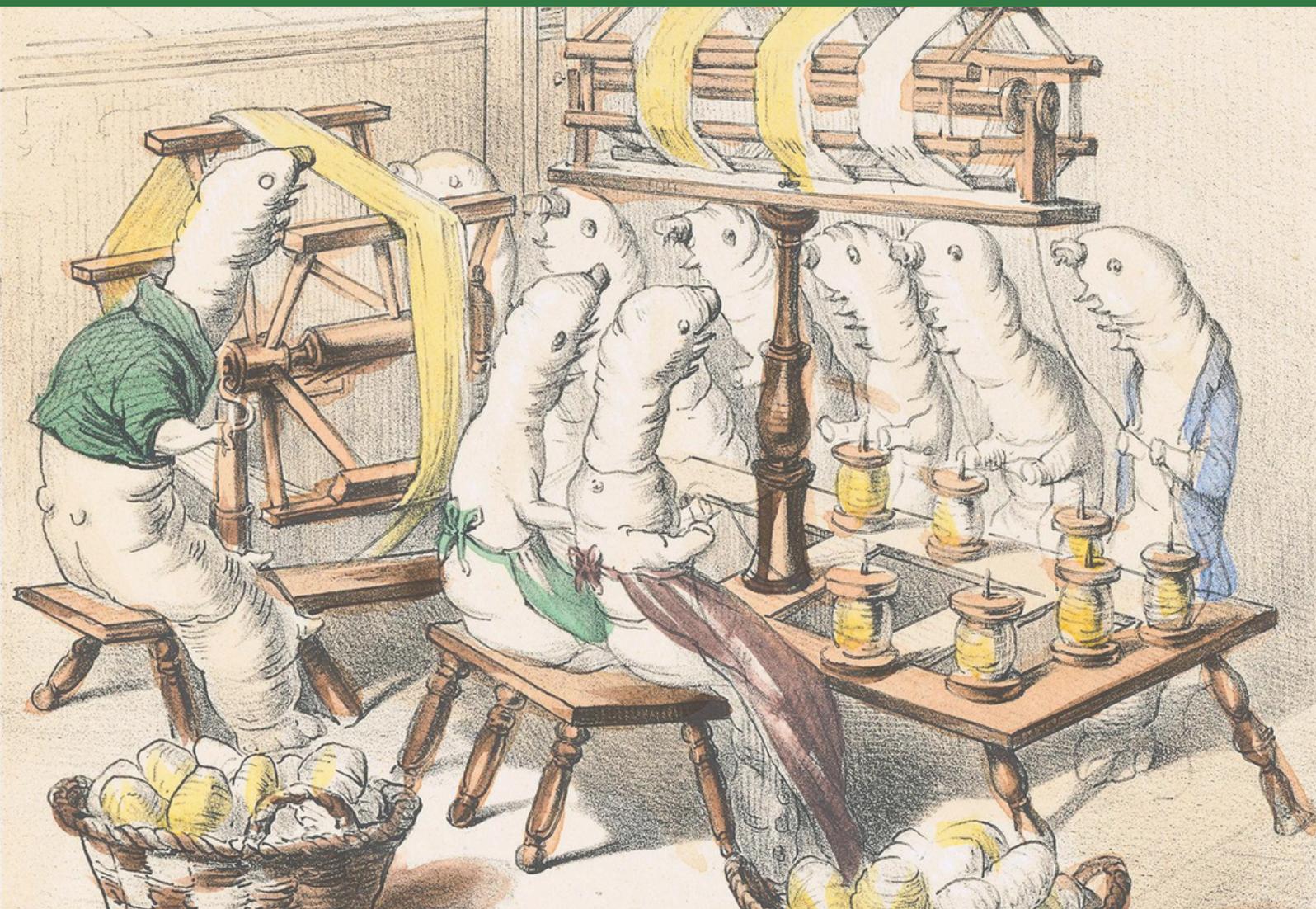
15.30-16.00 - *Knowledge economies of scarcity and economic projectors in eighteenth-century colonial Brazil*

Lavinia Maddaluno (Institut d'Etudes Avancées de Paris)

16.00-16.30 - *Founding a Cattle Civilization: Antonio Obligado's 1799 Plan for the Pampas of Buenos Aires*

Mattia Steardo (Università di Milano)

End of the workshop



The Fabric of Profit



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