



**UNIVERSITÉ  
DE GENÈVE**

INSTITUT D'HISTOIRE  
DE LA RÉFORMATION

## Institute of Reformation History



## SUMMER SCHOOL 2021

From 31 May to 4 June

**The Life Story. Controversial Uses of the Biographical Narratives in the French-speaking Reformation, 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Centuries**

From 7 to 11 June

**Reform, Renewal, Rupture. Situating the Reformation in the « Age of Reforms » (1250-1550)**

University of Geneva

## Institute of Reformation History

5 rue De-Candolle, CH – 1211 Geneva 4

The Institute of Reformation History (IHR) is an interdisciplinary research centre of the University of Geneva, dedicated to the history of the Reforms between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Research fields of its members range from intellectual history to cultural and political history, and to the history of women and gender.

In addition to its research library, the Institute houses the rare book and manuscript collection of the Musée Historique de la Réformation (16,000 volumes) and is in close proximity to the University Library (over 1,5 million volumes of printed books and manuscripts) and the Geneva State Archives.

Located at UNIBASTIONS, in the historic core of the University, the Institute provides excellent conditions for research in the above-mentioned subjects. Since 1999 it has been running an annual summer school for graduate students (MA), PhD students or early postdocs, in the fields of History, Philosophy, Literature, History of Religions, and Theology.

## Courses descriptions and aims

The aim of this Summer school is to enable participants to deepen their knowledge in a particular historical field and to familiarize themselves with the treatment of sources. Special attention is paid to learning the methods used in the study of intellectual and cultural history.

The courses are given from Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm. During a course, participants have direct contact with members of the teaching staff of the Institute of Reformation History and may ask to discuss their personal research with them. At the end of the Summer school, those who have been actively involved, especially in the afternoon seminars, will receive a certificate. Participants who so request may, in agreement with their institution and depending on the work done, obtain a certain number of ECTS credits (2 to 4).

At the time of registration, candidates may request to continue their stay at the Institute of Reformation History beyond the courses in order to benefit from the Institute's resources for their own work. Assistance may be granted for this purpose, depending on availability and after assessment of the request by the IHR teaching staff.

# Summer School 2021

## **The Life Story. Controversial Uses of the Biographical Narratives in the French-speaking Reformation, 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Centuries**

31 May - 4 June

Paul-Alexis Mellet and Daniela Solfaroli Camillocci

Considered as a historical genre « apart » in the division of literary forms inherited from Antiquity, given their moral implications, biographies – life stories – became increasingly important in the age of the Reformation. Since the middle of the 16th century, in the years of the first historiographical compilations by Protestant scholars and notably in connection with the transition between the first and second generation of reformers, biographical writing was reinvested in multiple ways. In addition, at the turn of the seventeenth century, confessional and apologetic preoccupations determined a specific institutional involvement in the memory struggles about the lives of the reformed faithful who were victims of persecution, as well as about their political and religious leaders.

Be it as biographies of the great « masters » of the Reformation, as exemplary life stories of men and women who testified to their fidelity to the Gospel, as famous profiles of the Protestant elite, or as life stories of their adversaries, these narratives have a major place in Reformed printed productions. But they are also affected by the challenges of the theological controversies or the political struggles of the Protestants on a European scale: there is a proliferation of texts retracing the « true history » of a particular reformer (Calvin) or his « marvelous destiny » (Bèze), in order to defend his memory or, on the contrary, to denounce his hidden impiety.

After discussing and comparing the different uses of the life story in the frameworks of historical, spiritual or political narratives (anecdotes, praises, « tombeaux », last hours, etc.), we will look more closely at biographies to question their methods and aims. What are the functions of this literary production in the context of the French-speaking Reformation? Why and how

to present the story of a life? How to measure its exemplary and polemical dimension? Is it simply about edifying by setting a narrative standard? Should we consider these life stories as a conventional literary form, or as an original component of religious polemics and a laboratory for historical inquiry?

Indeed, in the confessional era, the uses of biography respond to specific intentions, of not only memorial, religious or political nature sometimes contradicting themselves, but also in argumentative, editorial and narrative regards. The biographies that will be studied in this course are of various forms, but all these life stories involve an author, a subject and an audience, which must be identified and analyzed, by placing the selected writings in their production context.

# Program

*Monday 31 May:* Uses And Issues of Biographical Writings in the French-speaking Reformation. Introduction (Paul-Alexis Mellet and Daniela Solfaroli Camillocci)

- Activity related to the course

*Tuesday 1 June:* Revealing the Past / Denouncing the Present: Life Stories in the Historiographer's Workshop (Paul-Alexis Mellet and Daniela Solfaroli Camillocci)

- Seminar — Study of selected texts

*Wednesday 2 June:* Confessional Polemics and Editorial Strategies (Paul-Alexis Mellet)

- Seminar — Study of selected texts

*Thursday 3 June:* Memory Struggles: Calvin's «Lives» in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries (Daniela Solfaroli Camillocci)

- Seminar — Study of selected texts

*Friday 4 June:* The Exemplarity of the Life Course in the Reformed Culture: Perspectives and Assessments. Participants' workshop

- Conclusion of the course (Paul-Alexis Mellet et Daniela Solfaroli Camillocci)

## **Reform, Renewal, Rupture. Situating the Reformation in the « Age of Reforms » (1250-1550)**

7 - 11 June

Ueli Zahnd

Despite the often hegemonic use of the concept of ‘reform’ to describe the events surrounding the emergence of the Protestant churches in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the history of Western Christianity, and that of the Late Middle Ages in particular, has seen a multitude of reforms, ruptures and renewals. In the period from 1250 to 1550 in particular, the projects of reform – intellectual, cultural and social – are so numerous that this period has been called by several researchers the « age of reforms », including, of course, the Protestant reform itself. But does this mean that the Reformation was only one reform among others, that is, the last reform of the Middle Ages? Or is it to say that the Protestant reform was the only one to have been effective, as it put an end to a troubled period?

In this summer school, we will revisit the concept of reform and its application to the era in question. With a particular interest in the reforms of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the course will use a comparative approach to situate in the context of the late medieval reforms the events that led to the genesis of the Protestant churches. In the face of the numerous reforms then under way, it seems undeniable that the Protestant reform continued a trend that was generally present in the same intellectual and religious milieus from which it claimed to differ, so that it seems that it sought – in an obviously paradoxical manner – a form of rupture by continuity. But isn't this paradox inherent in the concept of reform itself – a paradox that should therefore be found in all the reforming tendencies of the late Middle Ages?

If this subject is primarily inspired by a historiographical problem, this course aims to find answers based primarily on the analysis of primary sources. How did the actors and protagonists of the movements in question envisage their reforms? Did they qualify them as a project of reform or did they prefer to use other notions? What balance did they find in their reformist attitude between

rupture and continuity, between renewal and innovation? Finally, what were the intended, and what were the unintended effects of their projects? Combining lectures and collaborative work on sources, this summer course aims to qualify a concept that might seem obvious to us at times, and thereby to contextualize what often continues to be referred to simply as « the Reformation ».



# Program

*Monday 7 June:* The « Age of Reforms ». On the Origins of a Historiographical Concept

- Activity related to the course

*Tuesday 8 June:* The Reforms of the Late Middle Ages: Issues, Structures, Diversity

- Seminar — Study of selected texts

*Wednesday 9 June:* Renaissance and Renewal: the *Zeitgeist* of an Era?

- Seminar — Study of selected texts

*Thursday 10 June:* The Protestant Reform Between Ruptures and Continuities

- Seminar — Study of selected texts

*Friday 11 June:* The « Counter-Reformation »: Reforming Between Acting and Reacting

- Round table — Conclusion of the course

## Linguistic requirements

The morning course will be given in French; the afternoon seminar will be given in both French and English. Candidates must have sufficient knowledge of both languages to be able to follow the courses. However, they will be able to express themselves in either English or French. Those who find it difficult to judge their level in these languages may contact a member of the teaching staff before registering.

## Application

The registration form must be completed online by **12 April**. Each candidate will have to indicate his/her wish to participate in the first, second, or both weeks of the summer school. A letter of motivation, a curriculum vitae, a brief presentation of the research carried out as part of the degree, doctoral thesis, or post-doctoral studies, as well as two signed letters of recommendation (PDF format) should be attached to the form. Applicants who have already completed an IHR summer school do not need the letters of recommendation but must produce updated versions of the other documents and also register via the online form.

Applications will be reviewed by the teaching staff; candidates will be notified of their decision within one week after the application deadline.

## Funding

Admission to the summer school takes the form of a residential scholarship, which covers the cost of half-board accommodation (breakfast and lunch). **The Institute does not contribute to the participants' travel expenses.**

As soon as they are notified of their acceptance, the selected candidates undertake to follow all the courses regularly. Candidates are asked to evaluate their participation according to their schedule. Late withdrawals (less than one

month before the start of the Summer school or early departures will result in exclusion from the following summer school organised by the Institute. For organisational reasons, a cancellation fee may be charged in the event of late withdrawal without justification.

## Teaching Staff

Paul-Alexis Mellet, Bachelor, Master I and II in Philosophy (Sorbonne-Paris IV), *agrégation* in History (Sorbonne-Paris I), PhD degree in History (Tours-CESR), *accreditation* to supervise research (Sorbonne-Paris IV). Professor at the Institut of Reformation History. Areas of expertise: early modernity in the fields of theological-political history, the history of the book and the history of religious practices.

Daniela Solfaroli Camillocci, MA of Letters (Pisa), PhD degree in early modern history (Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa), MAS in Reformed studies (Geneva). Professor at the Institut of Reformation History. Main areas of research: cultural history of early modern religious practices, history of Christian spirituality, women's and gender history of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Ueli Zahnd, studies in Theology and Philosophy (Bern and Paris), MAS in Reformed studies (Geneva), PhD degree in medieval philosophy (Freiburg im Breisgau). Professor at the Institut of Reformation History. Areas of expertise: the intellectual history of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, their traditions of thought and the continuity between the late Middle Ages and the Reformation. Apart from the traditional methods of intellectual history, UZ explores the approaches of digital humanities.