Ruptures in European History (Oxford, 15–17 Apr 26)

University of Oxford, UK, Apr 15–17, 2026
Deadline: Jan 18, 2026

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Ruptures in European History: Individuals, Institutions, and Historical Practices in Times of Uncertainty.

The 20th Graduate Annual Conference in European History (GRACEH).

‘The absurd, with its rupture of rationality - of conventional ways of seeing the world - is in fact an accurate and a productive way of understanding the world.’ - William Kentridge

What do an earthquake, a war, and the abolition of serfdom have in common? Ruptures can be experienced individually, locally, nationally, or globally, calling into question what is normal, natural, or everyday. As a metaphor, rupture carries more emotive weight than other descriptors like ‘transformation’ or ‘turning point’: it suggests a break in the perceived historical order, a crumbling of what once felt solid, a shock to the system - or a long-awaited breakthrough to a desired future. Moments of rupture can be experienced as catastrophe, but they can also represent opportunities for creativity, innovation, and adaptation, inspiring new ideas, communities, and ways of connecting with people and the environment.

In a moment felt by many as one of historical rupture, the 20th Annual Graduate Conference in European History invites graduate students working on any topic or period in European history and/or Europe in the world to submit papers on this theme. How do we define instances of sudden or extreme change in history? What events culminate in the tearing apart of previous systems? And what comes after? How have narratives of rupture changed over time? How productive is rupture as a concept for thinking historically?

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

Crisis as Rupture

Two most common man-made forms of crisis are revolutions and wars, but do they always constitute rupture? Are the changes wrought by war or revolution always long-term? How do postwar orders imagine, build on, or attempt to negate a pre-war, pre-rupture past?

Environmental Rupture

How have sudden or far-reaching environmental changes impacted societies, cultures, as well as the movements of people? How, or to what extent, have humans adapted to challenging environments? What if rupture is constant – e.g., during prolonged periods of climate instability or recur-

ring natural disasters?

Economic Rupture

How are moments of economic rupture (bankruptcy, financial crisis, system collapse, far-reaching state interventions) experienced at the individual, local, national, and global level? What is the relationship between severe economic disruption and social, cultural, or political change?

Art as Rupture and Renewal

What constitutes 'rupture' in the arts and culture? What role have the arts played in precipitating, recording, or reflecting broader social, cultural, or political upheavals? How do moments of rupture allow for artistic and intellectual creativity and innovation?

Rupture and Fragment

Does a rupture have to be a singular drastic change? Must it be all-encompassing or can it be partial or fragmentary? When does a fragmentary change become a rupture? What is the difference between a 'rupture' and a 'turning point'?

Narrating Rupture

How do we know when a rupture has taken place? Is this decided in the moment or after the fact? How do geopolitical disruptions impact methodological approaches? What new or alternative means of gathering information arise in times of historical rupture and how do they change history writing? What assumptions about historical continuity or change are embedded in the terms we use to describe it?

DATES AND INFORMATION

Please send abstracts up to 300 words and a brief biography (max 100 words) to: graceh2026@history.ox.ac.uk by 18 January 2026.

Participants will receive a notification of acceptance by 15 February 2026.

We particularly encourage submissions from those who have yet to present their work at conferences or are from underrepresented regions and/or institutions.

If you have questions, you can get in touch with the organizational team here: graceh2026@history.ox.ac.uk or visit our website (https://2026graceh.wixsite.com/home) for more information.

ABOUT GRACEH

The Graduate Annual Conference in European History (GRACEH), launched in Budapest in 2007, is organised by graduate students from Central European University, the European University Institute, the University of Vienna, and the University of Oxford.

The central aim of GRACEH is to create a network of graduate students and early career researchers in the field of European history, covering topics that range from the early modern period to the

recent past. GRACEH functions as a platform for historiographical, methodological, and theoretical discussion among peers and senior academics. Participants are encouraged to share their research within the framework of the conference topic.

Committee Organisers for the 20th Graduate Annual Conference in European History (GRACEH): Fionnuala Ennis (Balliol College, University of Oxford), Hannele Hellerstedt (Lincoln College, University of Oxford), Euan Huey (Wolfson College, University of Oxford), Yevhen Yashchuk (Wadham College, University of Oxford), Ioana Zamfir (St Catherine's College, University of Oxford)

Academic Advisory Board:
Dr Katherine Lebow (Christ Church, University of Oxford) and Dr Norman Aselmeyer (Wadham College, University of Oxford)

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