



Universität
Basel



Queen Mary
University of London

CRISIS

Queen Mary University meets Basel. Doctoral Exchange, London 19–20 March 2025

Call for Participants

Historians are no strangers to crises. We read and write about crises in history. We work and live in a time of crises - political, economic and environmental. And we grapple with all manner of intellectual, professional and personal crises as individuals, from archival absences to job precarity to bereavement. But what defines a crisis? What does a crisis do to those caught in their midst? Can crises be a distraction from other, important historical phenomena that are worthy of research? In this two-day workshop, we will reflect on how crises shape our work as historians.

Crises are not only events we analyse; they also shape the very conditions under which historical knowledge is produced. Periods of crisis often generate intensified documentation, and they can also shape the gaps, distortions or silences that characterize archival records. Reflecting on crises allows us to identify methodological opportunities and reflect on epistemological challenges: what does it mean to read materials created under exceptional pressure or uncertainty, and how do we account for the conditions of their emergence?

To address these questions, the workshop will consider crises on three distinct but intertwined levels:

I. Historiography:

How are crises conceptualized, analysed, and narrated as historical phenomena? What makes certain events legible as *crises*, and how does this categorization shape their place in historical interpretation, periodization, or comparison?

II. Metahistoriography and Reflection on Research Practice:

How do crises affect our own research processes, working conditions and academic environments? How do personal, institutional or structural crises shape the questions we ask, the archives we can access, or the positions from which we write?

III. Archives and Sources:

How do crises impact the production, preservation and interpretation of sources? How should we work with materials produced in moments of heightened uncertainty or rupture? How do intensified documentation and archival absences alter the epistemic foundations of historical work?

We invite papers that consider the role of crisis in individual research projects or the conceptual and methodological problems and possibilities they generate. Please submit an abstract of your proposed paper (300 words) as well as an intellectual biography (300 words) outlining your research interests and broader PhD project by 19.1.26 to Mirjam Janett (for Basel applicants) at mirjam.janett@unibas.ch or Georgia Koumara (for QM applicants) at sse-pgr@qmul.ac.uk, with the subject line including 'Basel/QM Exchange'.

If successful, participants will be expected to present for 15 minutes as part of a panel at the workshop. Draft papers for the presentation (2500-3000 words) will need to be pre-circulated to the appropriate panel discussant one week prior to the workshop, that is by 12 March 2026.