

Epidictic Rhetoric and the Medieval & Early Modern Sermon

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Course description

2019 brought the 40th anniversary of the publication of John O'Malley's brilliant study *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome* that put epideictic rhetoric practised in early modern sermons centre stage for the first time. O' Malley' seminal work did more than merely alert students to the extraordinary impact of rhetoric on curial practice and theory: it paved the way for a new assessment of the role of sermons in early modern literature on the one hand, and the impact of rhetoric on Renaissance theology on the other. In general, in the last two decades an increasing awareness in the fundamental importance of epideictic rhetoric for culture and politics has led to renewed and invigorated scholarly attention to this branch of the study and history of communication.

To celebrate the anniversary of O'Malley's book the Royal Dutch Institute in Rome organises a course on PhD/Research Master level on epideictic rhetoric in general and medieval and early modern sermons in particular, a genre of tremendous impact on European culture not just in the period of the Reformation but throughout. We will tour Rome from the perspective of epideictic rhetoric, from the classical *rostra*, via Medieval and Renaissance pulpits to Mussolini's balcony on Piazza Venezia and the window of the papal apartment in

Piazza San Pietro. We will listen to epideictic speeches that changed the course of world history, from the *Gettysburg Address* to 'I have a dream'. We will analyse the system of classical rhetoric and consult modern spin-doctors, seeking the assistance of Rosa van Gool, *Volkskrant* correspondent in Rome, to assess rhetoric in modern Italian politics. And we will talk of the practice of sermons in the period 1415-1650 throughout Europe, concentrating on the Roman scene: where, when and how were sermons held? What role did they play in church ritual and what they intend to achieve? What role did the theory and practice of ancient rhetoric play, and what controversies did rhetoric trigger within and outside of the church? What was the relation between the spoken sermon and its publication as a literary text? Was there any literary prestige involved in their production? What can we deduce from these texts regarding their public? Were Renaissance preachers converting or preaching to the converted? What rhetorical strategies were involved either way?

We will study these and related questions by inspecting the phenomenon of sermons inside out: we will visit churches and other venues where sermons were and still are held; we will carefully inspect the church furniture involved and the organisation of space there; we will look at representations of sermons and visit institutions where sermonising is taught; and we will study the theory and history of epideictic rhetoric.

The course will culminate in the students attending a two-day expert meeting in workshop form at the Institute and responding to papers. After an introductory lecture on the nature and reception of O'Malley's book and Renaissance rhetoric and a celebration of its anniversary (David Rijser), experts with different linguistic and literary expertise have been invited to share an early modern sermon of their choosing, treating both the text, its formal aspects and its embeddedness in the rhetorical tradition and in its different contexts, ritual, material, performative, ideological and occasional. We will hear of Arabic, Dutch, English, Greek, French, German, Italian and Latin sermons, presented in papers with discussion on the closing Friday and Saturday. Confirmed speakers are Ingrid Rowland (Notre Dame, Rome, Latin), Mary Morrissey (Reading, English) Leen Spruit (Nijmegen, Italian), Linda Jones (Barcelona, Arabic), Stratis Papaioannou (Crete, Byzantine Greek), Paul Smith (Leiden, French), Catrien Santing, Bram van de Velde and co-convenor Bart Ramakers (all Groningen).

Programme

The programme is divided into two constituent parts: six days of teaching by the organisers and available KNIR staff alternating with time for the students to work on their course papers in the KNIR library on the one hand; and the two-day expert meeting at the KNIR on the other, which the students will participate in as learners and discussants.

Students will work on their papers during four afternoon sessions (day 1, 2, 3, 5) and present their work-in-progress during short presentations on day 6. We plan six morning sessions (day 2, 3, 5, 6) devoted to visits and excursions in Rome. Day 4 will be devoted to an excursion to Campania and the superb Campanian medieval *amboni*.

Provisional schedule

Day 1: Introduction by the organisers / exploratory walk / setting up work on papers

Day 2: visit to a sermon somewhere in Rome / work on papers

Day 3: Forum Romanum (*rostra, curia*, Piazza Venezia and other oratorical sites / work on papers

Day 4: Excursion to Campania (Montecassino, Anagni, Sessa Aurunca, Minturno)

Day 5: The Vatican / work on papers

Day 6: meet-up with teachers of clerical oratory at the Congregation *de propaganda fide*/ short work-in-progress presentations of papers / attendance of key-note of expert meeting and reception

Day 7: expert meeting

Day 8: expert meeting

Literature

John O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome: Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court*, Duke University Press, 1979

Brian Vickers, *In Defence of Rhetoric*, Oxford 1988

Digital reader.

Target group and admission

The course is open to a maximum of 15 selected RMA and PhD students in (cultural) history, Language and Literature, general and comparative literature, reception studies, classics, the Modern Language and Culture departments, especially with specialisation in Dutch, English, French, Italian, German or Arabic, (art) history, heritage studies, cultural studies or related disciplines at MA, RMA or PhD level from KNIR partner universities (Universiteit van Amsterdam, Vrije Universiteit, Universiteit Leiden, Universiteit Utrecht, Radboud Universiteit, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen).

Course format and assignments

The course is organized by and hosted at the Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome (KNIR). It consists of a 6 days intensive seminar period in Rome, with lectures, on-site visits and discussions. The students are assigned a topic which they are to introduce briefly *in situ* (ca. 5'). This short presentation is graded with feed back. Following this seminar, the students attend a round table conference by different language, culture and history specialists on medieval and early modern sermons; they are assigned a specific paper to respond to, and actively participate in the discussion. The response is graded. Finally, they produce an end paper of 5000 words on a subject chosen in consultation with the course staff.

– a presentation *in situ* on a chosen topic, related to the topic of the end paper and the chosen site of presentation (1/6); and response to a paper in the conference: (1/6)

– a concluding essay (5.000 words), deadline 23 December 2020, 18.00h: 2/3 of 3/3

Credits and assessment

The study load is the equivalent of 5 ECTS (with possible extension to 6 ECTS). Each student should arrange with his/her home coordinator whether the course can be a part of the existing curriculum. After successful completion of the course the KNIR provides a certificate mentioning study load and evaluation.

The study load is based on:

(a.) presentation *in situ* on a chosen topic, related to the topic of the end paper and the chosen site of presentation (1/6);

(b.) response to a paper in the conference: (1/6)

(c.) a concluding essay (5.000 words), deadline 23 December 2020, 18.00h: 2/3 of 3/3

Costs

Tuition and lodging at the KNIR is free for selected participants from the abovementioned Dutch universities. Personal expenses, including meals, are not included. Students receive a €100 reimbursement of their expenses for travelling to Rome after submission of their final essay.

Facilities in Rome

All participants will be housed at the Royal Netherlands Institute in Rome's Villa Borghese Park. From there, it is only a short walk to the historical center of Rome. The KNIR accommodation consists of shared bedrooms and bathrooms, and includes a living and dining space, a large kitchen, washing machine and wireless internet. All residents have 24/7 access to the library and gardens of the Royal Netherlands Institute.