



Rethinking Contemporary British Political History: A Symposium for Early Career Researchers

7-8th September 2015
Queen Mary University of London

How is the political history of the recent past being written in Britain today, and how will it be written in the future? This symposium aims to map new directions in the historical study of British politics and government since c.1945, with a focus on new research being carried out by scholars at an early stage of their careers.

Hosted by the **Mile End Institute**, Queen Mary's centre for the study of politics, policy and public life, and the **School of History**, around 25 early career researchers will be joined by a group of more established scholars for two days of debate and dialogue over questions of conceptualisation, methodology, interdisciplinarity and the shifting historiographical landscape of contemporary British political history. Confirmed participants include **Pat Thane** (ICBH/KCL), **Jon Lawrence** (Cambridge), **Lucy Robinson** (Sussex), **Nicholas Crowson** (Birmingham), **Lucy Delap** (Cambridge) and **James Ellison** (QMUL).

Rationale: The study of recent British political history is a thriving field encompassing multiple subject areas and an eclectic range of conceptual and methodological approaches. These might be very loosely grouped in relation to two broad traditions: the first, associated with the pioneering work of Peter Hennessy and others in the 1980s, takes the study of policy elites as its focus, laying a strong emphasis on the complex interplay of personalities and institutional dynamics within central government. The second, associated with the 'New Political History' of the 1990s, deploys the conceptual tools and methodological innovations of cultural history to ask questions about political identities and political subjectivities, and about the interconnectedness of politics and everyday life. Both approaches to the subject offer rich possibilities

for public and policy engagement beyond the academy, a task which lies at the heart of the Mile End Institute's mission.

By showcasing new research in the field, the symposium presents an opportunity to reflect on how the study of recent British political history has evolved and is evolving in the twenty-first century. The event will also provide a valuable networking forum for early career and more established scholars active in the field and may lead to future collaborations.

This is the first in a series of four events organised by Dr Helen McCarthy (QMUL) on the theme of **Rethinking Contemporary British Political History** generously funded by the British Academy under its Rising Star Engagement Award scheme. The other events, to be held between September 2015 and March 2016, will include an oral history workshop co-hosted with the British Library, a roundtable on the archive of the future co-hosted with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Historians, and a one-day event on public engagement beyond the academy.

Expressions of interest to present papers are invited from early career researchers (**defined as being within 10 years of award of PhD**) who work on the history of British politics and/or government in the period since 1945. Advanced doctoral students are also welcome to submit expressions of interest.

Papers might address one or more of the following themes:

- Electoral culture and party politics
- Non-governmental activism
- Political ideology and political identities
- Politics and the media
- Political leadership and decision-making
- Policymaking and expertise
- Foreign policy, diplomacy and national sovereignty
- Parliament and constitution
- Emotions and politics

To facilitate extended high-level discussion, successful candidates will be asked to pre-circulate their papers and summarise key points for no longer than 10-15 minutes during the panel sessions. Commentary will be provided for each panel by one of the more established scholars in attendance. Travel bursaries are available and on-campus accommodation will be provided for participants who require it.

Please send your CV and paper abstract (300-500 words) to Dr Helen McCarthy at h.mccarthy@qmul.ac.uk by **Friday 15th May**. Successful candidates will be notified by the end of May.
