

Methodologies for the Use of History in Philosophy

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

WORKSHOP
METHODOLOGIES
for the use of history
IN PHILOSOPHY
NOVEMBER 13-14, 2025

This workshop aims to open interdisciplinary dialogue on how history is employed across philosophical domains, and what methodological and epistemic roles such uses play.
The event is held fully online and streamed publicly via the YouTube channel of the UNAM's Institute for Philosophical Research.

This event is supported by:

The Institute for Philosophical Research-UNAM

SECIHTI's Projects CF-2023-I-712 and CBF2023-2024-55
UNAM's PAPIIT Project IN406225

Online information

- The website of the event is: <https://www.filosoficas.unam.mx/sitio/workshop-methodologies-for-the-use-of-history-inphilosophy>
- The meeting will be hosted via Zoom <https://cuaed-unam-mx.zoom.us/j/83197668076>

Meeting ID: 831 9766 8076

Do not share the link on social media, please.

The room will be open about 10 minutes before for speakers and 5 minutes before for the general audience.

Note that Keynote talks are 1 hour long with 30 min QandA, and contributed talks are 30 min long with 20 of QandA.

- The talks will be hosted via the Institute for Philosophical Research's YouTube Channel <https://www.youtube.com/@filosoficastube>

Thursday, November 13, 2025.

Chair: Teresa Rodríguez

[16:00-17:30 CET || 09:00-10:30 MX] *Keynote Talk: “Newton’s Metaphysics in Practice”*

Kirsten Walsh (University of Exeter)

[17:30-18:20 CET || 10:30-11:20 MX] *“Reconstructing Trust: Social-Historical Trajectories of the Physician–Patient Relationship in Post-Unification Italy”*

Anna Gadignani (Sant’Anna School of Advanced Studies)

[18:20-18:30 CET || 11:20-11:30 MX] MINI-BREAK

[18:30-19:20|| 11:30-12:20 MX] *“Aristotle and Proclus on Mathematics as an Axiomatic Science: A Data-Driven Comparison”*

Maria Chiara Parisi (University of Amsterdam)

[19:20-20:10 CET||] *“A reply to incommensurability: from historiography to philosophy of logic”*

Evelyn Erickson (Federal University of Santa Catarina)

[20:10 -20:20CET || 12:20 -13:10 MX] MINI-BREAK

[20:20-21:10 CET|| 13:20-14:10 MX] *“A Meta-Narrativist Approach to the Reconstruction of Internal History: The Autonomy-Continuity Problem”*

Andrés Vázquez-Quijano (UNAM)

[21:10-22:00 CET|| 14:10-15:00 MX] *“Problems in the historical study of the intellectual and spiritual contributions of women in classical Islam from a gender perspective”*

Tzitzí Janik Rojas Torres (UNAM)

Tuesday, June 24, 2025.

Chair: María del Rosario Martínez-Ordaz

[15:30-17:00 CET|| 08:30-10:00 MX] *Keynote Talk “Towards a methodologist integration of history and philosophy of science. Marriage counseling from a pragmatist perspective”*

Jouni-Matti Kuukkanen (University of Oulu)

[17:00-17:50 CET|| 10:00-10:50 MX] *“Counterfactual Sufficiency in Historical Explanation: Old and New History in 1948”*

Zainab Sabra (Erasmus University Rotterdam)

[17:50-18:00 CET|| 10:50-11:00 MX] MINI-BREAK

[18:00-18:50 CET|| 11:00-11:50 MX] *“Historical Macro-Units as a Form of Conceptual Engineering”*

Bobby Vos (University of Cambridge)

[18:50-19:40 CET|| 11:50 -12:40 MX] *“Early Modern Feminist Approaches to Misogynistic Bias in the Historical Archive*

Natalia Zorrilla (McGill University)

[19:40 -19:50 CET|| 12:40-12:50 MX] MINI-BREAK

[19:50-20:40 CET|| 12:50-13:40 MX] *“Idealising the history of science for philosophical purposes”*

Dubian Cañas.

[20:40-21:30 CET|| 13:40-14:30 MX] *“Why **some** inaccurate case studies work? Reflections on the epistemic value of philosophically biased historical reconstructions”*

María del Rosario Martínez-Ordaz

“Newton’s Metaphysics in Practice”



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In his methodological statements, Newton explicitly eschewed metaphysical speculation, and yet metaphysical speculation can be found in all of his published work (and much of his unpublished work). Newton’s commentators thus face a dilemma: they can take Newton’s metaphysical speculations seriously, but this involves downplaying the sincerity of his methodological claims; or they can take his methodological claims seriously, and downplay the significance of his metaphysical speculations. In this paper, I offer a solution to the dilemma: study Newton’s metaphysics *in practice*. That is, focus not just on the content of the metaphysics, but on how it is discussed and developed, and what roles it plays in Newton’s work. Focusing on Newton’s optical metaphysics in practice, I demonstrate that this approach yields two important insights. Firstly, metaphysics isn’t part of the content of Newton’s optical theories, but rather provides an instrument for investigating optical phenomena. Secondly, the fundamental distinction in Newton’s optical work isn’t between physics and metaphysics, but between theories and hypotheses. Recognising these features of Newton’s work is revelatory, both of Newton’s methodology and of the way he builds his metaphysics.

“Reconstructing Trust: Social-Historical Trajectories of the Physician–Patient Relationship in Post-Unification Italy”



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Drawing on a dialogue between historical reconstruction and medical ethics, this study examines how social, legal, and professional practices influenced the moral understanding of fiducia within the medical profession of post-Unification Italy (1865–1910), providing a historically grounded perspective on a concept often treated in abstract philosophical terms. Building on distinctions articulated by Annette Baier, Karl de Fine Licht, and Bengt Brülde between trust and reliability, it situates these notions within a concrete socio-historical context—the *medico condotto* (public health officer), a central figure in nineteenth-century Italian healthcare and in the process of nation-building.

Through the analysis of medical codes of conduct, professional statutes, legal proceedings, popular writings, folklore materials, and polemical pamphlets, the research reconstructs how trust in physicians functioned as a social achievement rooted in everyday practices and norms, rather than as a purely moral disposition. These practices were shaped by cultural expectations, habits, and conventions that sustained relationships of care and authority between doctors, patients, and communities. *Fiducia* thus emerges not as an abstract moral duty, but as a condition for legitimising both medical authority and civic belonging.

The physician’s trustworthiness depended on social performance and institutional recognition, while non-institutional healers—particularly women such as midwives—were systematically marginalised. Their exclusion reveals the epistemic and ethical consequences of historical power realignments that determined who could claim professional legitimacy and moral authority.

Methodologically, the research employs an interdisciplinary approach that combines archival triangulation, textual micro-analysis, and contextualised genealogy. This strategy avoids anachronism while enabling case-based reasoning about normative responsibilities. A historical perspective on moral concepts such as trust can enrich philosophical reflection by uncovering their contingent, embodied, and socially mediated origins. The case of the *medico condotto* demonstrates how moral

concepts evolve through interactions among normative discourses, legal frameworks, and everyday practices. Tracing this genealogy reveals that trust in medicine cannot be adequately understood without attending to the cultural and institutional histories that sustain it.

Ultimately, the study contributes to the broader dialogue on the role of history in philosophy by demonstrating how historical inquiry can serve as a critical tool for recontextualizing and reevaluating philosophical categories. Examining how trust was historically constituted in the medical domain provides both insight into the ethics of care and resources for expanding reflection in contemporary clinical bioethics, grounding current practices in a richer moral understanding.

“Aristotle and Proclus on Mathematics as an Axiomatic Science: A Data-Driven Comparison”



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Since Antiquity, mathematics has often been conceived as the paradigm of scientific rationality. In his *Posterior Analytics* and *Metaphysics*, Aristotle presents his far-reaching ideal of proper science. A science must proceed from principles (or *axioms*), explain what follows from them via demonstrations, and investigate a unified subject genus. It is in the sense that a science is axiomatic. For Aristotle, mathematics satisfies these three criteria: it starts from axioms, employs demonstrations as explanations, and studies quantities. I call Aristotle’s axiomatic ideal in its mathematical exemplification the *Axiomatic Science for Mathematics* model (AM model).

In this paper, I combine interpretative and computational approaches to offer a concept-explicit, corpus-based reconstruction of ancient accounts of mathematics as axiomatics. I develop the AM model as an explicit interpretative framework for the key concepts that define an axiomatic science for Aristotle (*axioms*, *demonstrations*, and *subject genus*) and use it to guide a systematic, corpus-based comparison of the works of Aristotle and the fifth-century Neoplatonist Proclus. Since concepts are abstract and discussed through terms in texts, each concept in the model is mapped to curated clusters of ancient Greek terms drawn from primary sources, such as Aristotle’s above-mentioned works. Using computational tools, I expand these clusters and use them as search input across a ~3M token corpus. This process enables me to retrieve relevant passages in which multiple key concepts are discussed together and then to annotate them both quantitatively and through close reading. In this way, the data-driven approach supports my philosophical analysis: the model makes assumptions explicit, computational techniques expand the evidence base, and annotation traces the distribution of views across the corpus.

This methodological approach is especially suitable for addressing large-scale, historiographical questions, such as the one pursued here. In his *Commentary on*

Euclid's Elements, Proclus also describes mathematics as an axiomatic science, but he oddly attributes to Aristotle the view that mathematics is not explanatory. Existing interpretations suggest that this results from Proclus' departure from Aristotle's notion of scientific explanation, often traced to Stoic influence. These interpretations, however, come with severe risks, e.g. overlooking Aristotle's notion of scientific explanation, underestimating the extent to which Proclus' own philosophical system inherits Aristotle's axiomatic framework, and obscuring Proclus' original adaptations within his philosophy. The question is then: Does Proclus conceive mathematics as an explanatory, *axiomatic science in Aristotle's sense*, or does his account fundamentally differ?

Using a data-driven approach, I show that both Aristotle and Proclus conceive mathematics as an exemplary axiomatic science. Aristotle's axiomatics is not only inherited by Proclus, but it is also reworked within his Neoplatonic ontology, proving its portability and flexibility across different philosophical systems. From a methodological perspective, this paper illustrates how a data-driven approach (conceptual modelling, computational techniques, and quantitative annotations) can enhance historiographical reconstructions while retaining philosophical depth. Working with concepts as explicit interpretative models and computational tools, this research embodies an adaptable framework for a concept-based, data-driven history of philosophy.

“A reply to incommensurability: from historiography to philosophy of logic”



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From philosophy of science, incommensurability threatens the rational assessment of a theory due to a lack of common language. Over time and between paradigms, concepts shift their meaning, and there is the threat of relativism: each theory can only be accessed by its own standard. This phenomenon is also relevant to historiography, where it is acknowledged that our separation in time and space leads to conceptual separation from authors of the past. The historiographer is thus faced with three methodological choices: anachronism, relativism or resist incommensurability. Historiographers do the latter, arguing that commensurability is the only choice that makes historiography possible. The meaning of concepts is not arbitrary, and while being polysemic, concepts remain stable enough such that fruitful engagement with past theories is possible. This same framing can be applied to the philosophy of logic, as a way to understand logical disagreements: can there be another set of reasoners that employ a different standard of rationality than our own? The traditional answer is no, because logic is objective and general. Yet a positive reply can be given, such that acknowledging other forms of reasoning does not amount to relativism or incommensurability. The present proposal is that the philosopher of logic can avail herself of the same argument as historiographers.

“A Meta-Narrativist Approach to the Reconstruction of Internal History: The Autonomy-Continuity Problem”



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Here, I explore the methodologies for reconstructing the internal history of a research program, with a focus on the epistemic constraints that grant evidential significance for philosophical use.

Reconstructions of internal history of relevant periods within a research program are central epistemic resources in philosophy: they generate evidential grounds either for inferring normative theses or for testing such theses against historical cases [Losee, 1987]. Traditionally, a research program is reconstructed by organizing its heuristic rules into two sets: a fixed hard core—which identifies the program throughout its history—and a series of shifting protective belts [Lakatos, 1981]. For reconstructions to be philosophically useful, however, they must both: (i) be *autonomous* in explaining the rational growth of knowledge (internal history) and (ii) portray research programs as *continuous* historical entities.

A difficulty arises because the status of a heuristic rule is determined only *a posteriori*, once the reconstruction is complete, I call this, *the autonomy-continuity problem*. Musgrave objects that hard cores do not, in fact, remain fixed [Musgrave, 1976]; for instance, a rule long considered part of the hard core may suddenly be reassigned to the protective belt at time t . In that case, either the reconstruction before t fails to be autonomous—since it cannot account for the membership change—or the reconstruction after t fails to present the program as a continuous historical object—since the hard core has been altered. The methodology of reconstruction thus reveals itself as defective due to its inability to ensure autonomy and continuity.

Here, I argue that a meta-narrativist approach to the reconstruction of the internal history of a research program provides a stronger framework for securing both autonomy and continuity. On this view, history is divided into distinct epochs, each explained by an individual narrative. Each narrative colligates a set of historical events (successes, failures, new theoretical concerns, etc.) around the thesis that

local heuristic rules are grouped into a distinct unified set —thus granting autonomy. The overall historical reconstruction then takes the form of a *meta-narrative* which integrates the individual narratives into a coherent whole, explaining the transformation of one set of local heuristic rules into the next by means of *connective events* —thus granting continuity.

I proceed in four steps. First, I emphasize the epistemic role of historical reconstructions for its philosophical use. Second, I present the classic approach to the reconstruction of research programmes and the significance of Musgrave's challenge to their philosophical uses. I illustrate this with the case of *modified newtonian dynamics* [Milgrom, 1983], an empirically successful modification of classical celestial mechanics. Third, I outline the foundations of the meta-narrativist approach and how it succeeds in ensuring autonomy and continuity. Finally, I present some concluding remarks.

“Problems in the historical study of the intellectual and spiritual contributions of women in classical Islam from a gender perspective”



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In medieval Islamic discourse, history often provides exempla and archetypes, reducing past events to privileged, providential moments for re-enactment that privileges male gaze and agency.

In contrast, critical approaches, especially feminist history, treat histories as “rhetorical constructs,” highlighting the interpretive nature of representation and critiquing male centered narratives and authorship.

The problem of the epistemic significance of historically inaccurate or highly idealized reconstructions, particularly concerning classical Islam, is crucial. The “romantic approach” often depicts Islam as emerging without context, followed by an inevitable decline. This “culturalist determinism” creates an unchanging “essence” or “monolithic doctrinal basis,” fostering a “timelessness myth” that disregards historical complexity. Such idealization, exemplified by the marginalization of women from classical historiography, constitutes an “ideological construct” that distorts understanding to uphold patriarchal hegemony: however, the recovery of historical female figures in Islam has often two sides. On one side, their interpretation is framed through a contemporary, Western feminist lens, which often disconnects them from their religious context. On the other, there are readings that seek to reclaim these female figures but do so by imposing the veil of Islamic conservatism—a product of a morality inherited through colonialism. This leads to the question : How can these historical figures be recovered without falling into anachronisms?

**“Towards a methodologist integration of history and philosophy of science.
Marriage counseling from a pragmatist perspective”**



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My talk proposes a *methodologist* integration of history and philosophy of science (HPS). I begin by sketching the inferentialist–pragmatist foundations of methodologism, a position that I develop in my forthcoming book *Doing, Knowing, and Getting it Right. Methodologism as Pragmatism* (Cambridge 2026). It defines knowing and meaning through doing correctly rather than through representational correspondence. Methodologism is thus a fully anti-representationalist epistemology that grounds normativity in rule-governed communal practice.

My talk then revisits the long-standing efforts to integrate HPS, which is often narrated through metaphors of marriage and structured around three dominant models: the disparity model (e.g. Giere), the confrontation model (e.g. Laudan, Scholl), and the hermeneutic model (e.g. Schickore). Each model captures a different understanding of how philosophy may relate to the history of science, yet all presuppose the divide between the descriptive and the normative, even the hermeneutical model.

From a pragmatist perspective the normative is not transcendent but immanent in communal practice. Studying the scientific community is therefore simultaneously a descriptive and a normative enterprise. I argue that methodologism dissolves the gap between historical description and philosophical evaluation by showing that both concern the proprieties of doing within shared inferential frameworks in a community. The result is a genuinely integrated HPS, in which history and philosophy jointly articulate the ways of doing, or methods, by which we come to know and to get things right.

“Counterfactual Sufficiency in Historical Explanation: Old and New History in 1948”



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“We live and move and have our being in a space structured by norms.” (Brandom, 1998) How, then, do we write the history of those who act within such normative spaces? What is lost when their pasts are reconstructed through explanatory models borrowed from the natural sciences? This paper challenges methodological unificationism, from Hempel’s covering-law model to Mackie’s sufficiency-based inference, arguing that these approaches impose an illusion of necessity that obscures agency and renders violence morally evasive. I propose instead that historical explanation must begin from the forms of evidence a historical situation itself produces. Archives are not neutral repositories but historically and politically constituted, and new material conditions give rise to new forms of evidence, which in turn demand new explanatory models. To historicize methodology is therefore to allow explanatory form to emerge from the evidentiary conditions of the past rather than imposing it in advance. Drawing on Palestinian historiography after 1948 and 1967–1970, I show how non-events, indictments, *buldāniyāt*, literature, and ruins function as historically specific forms of evidence that reconfigure what it means to explain. What emerges is a mode of writing history from within—one that treats partiality, silence, and fragment not as methodological failures, but as the very conditions through which the past becomes knowable.

“Historical Macro-Units as a Form of Conceptual Engineering”



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The second half of the twentieth century saw the emergence of a distinctive style of historical philosophy of science, in which various novel units of analyses (paradigms, research programmes, research traditions, etc.) were put forward with the aim of systematizing the historically diverse range of manifestations of scientific enquiry. In contemporary approaches to integrating history and philosophy of science, however, the use of such *historical macro-units* has largely fallen by the wayside. In this paper, I argue that—while this state of disrepute is not without justification—we may reappraise the value of historical macro-units by retroactively taking them to be instances of *conceptual engineering* (i.e. the activity of ‘designing’ concepts to fulfill certain practical needs). To this end, I first note that we may construe the formulation of a historical macro-unit as an attempt to expound a useful concept with which to characterize the amorphous notion of *historical context*. Following this, I distinguish two roles historical macro-units might play in philosophy of science, to wit a *narrative* role and a *relativizing* role, and show that we may use historical macro-units in this latter capacity to minimize historical bias in philosophical definitions.

“Early Modern Feminist Approaches to Misogynistic Bias in the Historical Archive”



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This presentation explores two distinct approaches within early modern feminism to the historical archive, understood as available sources for reconstructing women's history and explaining gender inequality. The first approach involves the creation of conjectural histories of human socio-political organization to account for the origin of gender inequality. These speculative narratives aim to genealogically explain the problem of gynodicy, i.e., the incompatibility between theoretical gender equality and empirical gender inequality (men's domination of women) and may have been created due to the perceived unreliability of historical sources and their potential misogynistic bias. The second approach, conversely, reclaims empirical history for feminist ends and seeks to reconstruct women's history and dismantle essentialist myths about female inferiority. This approach necessitates, however, the development of a feminist methodology to neutralize the inherent misogynistic bias within the archive. I will explore the tension between these two approaches in François Poulain de la Barre's feminist treatises and in Louise Dupin's *Des femmes* to analyze their stances on the trustworthiness and epistemic authority of historical sources, as well as their methods for integrating diverse historical materials and addressing misogynistic bias within their work.

“Idealising the history of science for philosophical purposes”



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HPS practitioners are often accused of constructing historical narratives that idealise complex scientific episodes to make philosophical points. This is thought to create a methodological barrier: doing integrated HPS must not suspend the standards of history to advance philosophy, yet idealising episodes seems to violate norms of historical adequacy. I argue, however, that we are justified in idealising the history of science for philosophical purposes. By offering a taxonomy of idealisation strategies in the philosophical uses of history, I propose criteria for assessing the quality of idealised narratives. I thus defend that optimal strategies construct idealisations that are epistemically valuable. My argument draws upon two hitherto neglected points. First, historical narratives are to be evaluated as (in)adequate for particular purposes; they are therefore not substantially different from scientific models. Second, idealised narratives facilitate approaching research problems whose nature demands integrating history and philosophy; they are simply a species of epistemic tool for conducting difficult interdisciplinary work. Thus, the quality of idealised narratives is ultimately a function of their adequacy in serving the legitimate purposes of historically oriented philosophers. To articulate this epistemological account, I examine some concrete works in the historical philosophy of science as a subfield of integrated HPS.

“Why *some* inaccurate case studies work? Reflections on the epistemic value of philosophically biased historical reconstructions”



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This talk pursues a dual aim. On the one hand, it examines the epistemological foundations of employing philosophically biased historical reconstructions within the philosophy of science. On the other hand, it seeks to provide meta-philosophical support for non-factivist theories of scientific understanding. I argue that certain biased historical reconstructions play a crucial epistemic role in strengthening philosophical understanding –of both, historical episodes and philosophical theses.

My central thesis rests on three observations.

First, some historically biased reconstructions can deepen our understanding of philosophical theses about science by clarifying their key concepts, illustrating their possible applications, or shedding light on the historical episodes with which they interact.

Second, they achieve this by exemplifying relevant structural features of philosophical theses, while also providing contextual grounding and highlighting potential challenges to their assessment.

Third, the kind of understanding they promote is non-factive (cf. Elgin 1996, 2004, 2009, 2017) and, more importantly, aligns with a structuralist conception of scientific understanding (cf. Macías-Bustos and Martínez-Ordaz 2023; Martínez-Ordaz and Macías-Bustos 2024).

By combining insights from integrated history and philosophy of science with recent epistemological accounts of understanding, here, I defend that even historically inaccurate reconstructions can be epistemically productive within philosophical inquiry.

Organizing Committee:

Teresa Rodríguez
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Many thanks
for joining us in
this adventure!

Teresa Maria

INVESTIGACIONES FILOSÓFICAS - UNAM 

WORKSHOP online METHODOLOGIES for the use of history IN PHILOSOPHY

NOVEMBER 13-14, 2025

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