



## Pierre Bourdieu and History *Influences, inspirations, interactions*

International conference  
21-22 April 2022  
Oxford

St Peter's College  
Maison française d'Oxford

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu died in 2002. His work continues to be highly influential, as evidenced by an ongoing editorial activity and the international dissemination of his writings. While Bourdieu left his mark on many intellectual areas through the breadth of his theories, he established a privileged dialogue with history as a discipline. Twenty years later, this conference aims to shed further light on the links between history, historians, and Bourdieu's scientific legacy.

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**21 April 2022, St Peter's College, New Inn Hall St**

9:30

Pascal Marty (CNRS, director of the Maison française d'Oxford) – *Welcome*

Minh-Hà Pham (CNRS, Counsellor for Science and Technology at the French Embassy in the United Kingdom) – *Opening remarks*

Anne Friederike Müller-Delouis (Université d'Orléans) & Arietta Papaconstantinou (University of Reading) – *Twenty years later*

9:45-10:45

**KEYNOTE 1**

Derek Robbins (University of East London) – *Homo historicus*

<coffee break>

11:15-12:45

**SESSION 1**

Ingrid Holtey (Universität Bielefeld) – *Histoire et sociologie : un parcours personnel*

Franck Poupeau (CNRS, Paris) – *Beyond the differentiation of modern societies: field theory and its analytical shifts*

<lunch (speakers only)>

14:30-16:00

**SESSION 2**

Nathan Schlanger (École nationale des chartes – PSL, Paris) – *From technology to material culture: reading Bourdieu with objects in mind*

Andrew Gardner (University College London) – *Bourdieu and the practice turn in archaeology: an incomplete revolution*

<coffee break>

16:30-18:00

**SESSION 3**

James McDougall (University of Oxford) – *Space, language, and symbolic power*

Bella Sandwell (University of Bristol) – *Bourdieu, habitus and cognitive science: on the possibilities of religious change in late antiquity*

<drinks>

<conference dinner>



Pierre Bourdieu, David Wiggins and Jacques Bouveresse  
Oxford, 27 February 1996 © MFO

**22 April 2022, Maison française d'Oxford, 2-10 Norham Rd**

9:30-10:30

**KEYNOTE 2**

Gisèle Sapiro (CNRS, EHESS) – *Reproduction, structural transformation and crises: Bourdieu's historical sociology*

<coffee break>

11:00-12:30

**SESSION 4**

Marie Legendre (University of Edinburgh) – *Bourdieu and the early Islamic state*

Antoine Destemberg (Université d'Artois) – *Were medieval theologians sociologists? Pierre Bourdieu and the astonishment of the Middle Ages*

<lunch (speakers only)>

14:00-15:30

**SESSION 5**

Anaïs Albert (Université de Paris Cité) – *The usefulness of Pierre Bourdieu for the 19th-century social history: working classes, domination and agency*

Lilian Mathieu (École normale supérieure, Lyon) – *Bourdieu and May 68: from student demography to political crisis*

<coffee break>

15:50-18:00

**SESSION 6**

Benoît de l'Estoile (CNRS Paris, CMH) – *Dancing on a tight rope: Bourdieu and anthropology*

*Round table – The sociologist between history and anthropology: a unified social science?*

Sondra Hausner (University of Oxford) – Adam Kuper (London School of Economics) –

Arietta Papaconstantinou (University of Reading), moderated by Anne Friederike

Müller-Delouis (Université d'Orléans)

<wine & cheese>

## Pierre Bourdieu and History

### *Influences, inspirations, interactions*

Twenty years after the death of Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002), his work continues to raise questions, as evidenced by an ongoing editorial activity, from the recent publication of lectures given at the Collège de France (*Anthropologie économique*, 2017) to a new scientific edition of *Travail et travailleurs en Algérie* (2021), to the very exhaustive *Dictionnaire international Bourdieu* (2019). Outside France, the international circulation of Pierre Bourdieu's ideas continues with further translations of his works, handbooks and other syntheses. New scientific publications testify to the continuing reception of Bourdieu's thought within different intellectual traditions.

While Pierre Bourdieu has left his mark on many disciplines through the sheer breadth of his theories and the diversity of his research topics, the affinities and the points of friction with history are particularly striking. In April 2022, a conference at the Maison française d'Oxford aims to shed further light on the links between history and Bourdieu's scientific and political activity, from his early work on Algeria to his public engagements at the turn of the last century. How far have we come concerning the project of a unified social science that Pierre Bourdieu wished for, "where history would be a historical sociology of the past and sociology a social history of the present"?

*Bourdieu as a historian.* – Philosopher turned anthropologist and sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu always paid attention to historical contexts and the effects of history in the present. Contrary to some preconceived ideas, Bourdieu did propose a theory of socio-historical change. Some of his concepts, e. g. the 'field' (with its sociogenesis), and the 'habitus' (resulting from embodied history), make it possible to explain not only the permanence of social spaces but also the emergence of discontinuities in history. Bourdieu repeatedly analysed crises and ruptures: in peasant societies, in colonial contexts, at the emergence of avant-garde art and literature, during the socio-political upheavals of the 1960s and 1990s. In what ways should we view the methods and analyses of Bourdieu as a historian, particularly in relation to historiographic schools?

*Bourdieu, witness to history.* – In post-war France, Bourdieu experienced first-hand the changes affecting rural society and the ambiguous effects of the national education system. In Algeria, he witnessed colonial domination and the resulting armed conflict. At the same time, Bourdieu acted on history himself, both through the influence of his research and through his political commitments. Bourdieu demanded that researchers permanently reflect on their categories and positions. But could he go so far as to historicise his own person? Is it possible to elucidate the blind spots in his own history that might have escaped his self-analysis?

*The historians' Bourdieu.* – Finally, Bourdieu established a permanent dialogue with history as a discipline, engaging in debates with professional historians in France and abroad. Through the criticisms he deployed, rightly or wrongly, against the academic practice of history (the "teleological illusion", the "cult of good writing", "distrust of concepts", "spontaneous positivism", "incorrectly formulated problems", "latent statements on the present", etc.), Bourdieu outlined a new approach to history. In the course of his work, Bourdieu sketched out a redefinition: history as a reflexive science looking at its own functioning, firmly anchoring its theory in practice, envisaging a way of

working collectively, going beyond disciplinary divisions and adopting a comparative and transnational approach. These proposals have undeniably renewed the approaches adopted by historians who have consequently defined innovative research topics, explored new types of sources and placed Bourdieu's concepts at the heart of neglected historical fields. In what ways do historians use Bourdieu's theories and methods today? Are there partial appropriations, inspirations or borrowings, more or less avowed, or on the contrary criticisms? How has the international reception of Bourdieu differed in research on different historical periods, in different historiographic schools and different countries? If we can assess Bourdieu's influence in historical science, is it possible to identify a potential for future research in a critical dialogue with his work?

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Pierre Bourdieu's work has had a sometimes late but nonetheless sustained reception in the UK. On several occasions, Bourdieu travelled across the Channel to London, Cambridge and Oxford. In February 1996, he gave a lecture at the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology in Oxford and then held a dialogue with the philosopher Jacques Bouveresse at the Maison Française. In 2012, at the 10th anniversary of his death, a conference was organised at the Maison Française d'Oxford, bringing together French academics, but the proceedings were not published. In 2022, to commemorate the 20th anniversary of his death, and again at the Maison française d'Oxford, a dialogue between Bourdieu specialists and especially between English or American and French historians will be organised. Bourdieu reconsidered by history, and by historians: the event will make it possible to evaluate the posterity and the fruitful reception of a work that deserves to be read again and again.

Anne Friederike Müller-Delouis – Arietta Papaconstantinou

