

Call for Papers

Praise for the historian's craft: What's new?

or

Historical experience and its epistemological sublimation

24 nov. 2025 INALCO, Paris (France)

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In 2026, Marc Bloch will enter the Pantheon. His contribution to the renewal of historian praxis is considerable, and there are many reasons to reflect on his life and reread his work. From a strictly historiographical point of view, he is, along with Lucien Febvre, the founder of the *Annales* school and the history of *mentalités*, with the intellectual posterity that we know. But Bloch is also one of the few historians to have left us systematic reflections on the praxis of history. Thus, between the historian's praxis and the researcher's reflexivity, we discover the experience of history. Indeed, his life was marked by the two world wars, as a soldier, a member of the Resistance and as a simple individual living through difficult times. And Bloch is fully aware of this. From the trenches of the Great War, he detected the phenomenon of spreading false rumors and wrote a book about it. What a strange coincidence with today's post-truth era! During the dark years 1939-1943 - when he was successively a defeated soldier, an academic excluded from teaching as a Jew, then reinstated as a professor in Montpellier, and finally a member of the Resistance movement's general board - he wrote his magnificent *Apologie pour l'histoire* (engl. transl. *The Historian's Craft*) a posthumous work published in 1949 by his *alter ego*, Lucien Febvre, to whom he dedicated the manuscript:

“Long have we worked together for a wider and a more human history. Today our common task is threatened. Not by our fault. We are vanquished, for a moment, by an unjust destiny. But the time will come, I feel sure, when our collaboration can again be public, and again be free.”

Taking the example of Marc Bloch as its starting point, this workshop is not intended as a tribute to the man he was, nor as an exegesis of his work. Rather, it invites us to engage in a kind of role-playing, in which we take up Marc Bloch's question: are we in a position to propose new appraisals for the historian's craft?

This workshop is organized around two major themes: the epistemology of history today, and the experience lived by the professional researcher in troubled times.

1. The epistemology of history today

As we have already emphasized, *Apologie pour l'histoire* ou *Métier d'historien* is a landmark work. It is part of a genealogy that runs from Langlois and Seignobos to Paul Veyne via Henri Irénée Marrou. Unfortunately, this genealogy does not include many names, as historians often leave epistemological reflection on historical practice to philosophers. We would like to encourage such reflection, and welcome proposals addressing questions such as:

Are we witnessing any “comebacks”, such as the resurgence of the *event*, of the *political* lens, or of *positivism*?

Is there anything new in assessing the notion of *document* or *trace*?

How does historical *explanation* work today?

How is the *causality* currently envisaged?

What is the role of *seriation*?

What is the significance of *case studies*?

What is the place of *detail* in historical reasoning?

What is the critique of *anachronism*?

Does the researcher's approach include an *examination of his own subjectivity*?

These questions are not exclusive, and any other proposal questioning the epistemology of history will be considered.

2. The professional historian in troubled times

At a time when armed conflicts are shattering our lives, whether in the flesh or in the mind, when the spectre of dictatorship is resurfacing in expected and unexpected places, how do researchers live through the experience of troubled times?

What is their day-to-day intellectual life?

What are their plans for the future as "professionals"?

To answer the call:

Send an abstract of 250-300 words clearly describing the issue addressed for a 30-minute presentation. Proposals may be in French or English. Deadline for submission: May 31, 2025.

Response from the organizers: June 15, 2025. Mailing address: mihaela-madalina.vartejanu-joubert@inalco.fr, nicolas.pitsos@bulac.fr.