

International conference:
Queer Pasts: What's *Queer* in Queer History?

University of Copenhagen and Roskilde University, Denmark
21-23 May 2025

Call for papers

Queer history commonly refers to the study and documentation of the lives, experiences, cultures, and struggles and joys of LGBTQ+ people in the past. It covers a wide range of topics, including how gender and sexual diversity has been expressed, understood, and regulated in different societies, as well as how political, social, and cultural movements have sought to challenge discrimination and promote LGBTQ+ rights. In this sense, queer history is about carving out the contours of queer and trans lives, communities and cultures of the past.

Queer history is about challenging traditional ideas about archives and representation. Much of queer history has been erased, suppressed, silenced, or ignored by mainstream historical narratives. Queer historians have had to work creatively to uncover queer histories, using letters, diaries, court records, photographs, and oral histories to reconstruct the lives of LGBTQ+ people.

Queer history often challenges proper objects of study. While queer history aims to understand and shed light on LGBTQ+ pasts, we do not always know beforehand how these sexual and gendered categories emerge and assemble in distinct historical or contemporary situations. Therefore, queer history increasingly investigates the intersection of LGBTQ+ identity with other marginalized identities, including race, class, and disability. It can be argued that modern categories of gender and sexuality cannot be understood outside the violent historical and cultural fabrication of racial difference during slavery, colonialism, and imperialism. In this way, queer history often intersects with other critical approaches, such as feminism, postcolonialism, and critical race theory, to understand how gender and sexuality are shaped by other social factors like race, class and disability, as well as mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion.

Queer history is also about *queering* history. To question and challenge History's research traditions as well as contest binary categorizations such as male/female, heterosexual/homosexual, and normal/deviant. To deconstruct and rethink how these categories have been created and used in different societies over time, and how they have affected people's lives, identities, and behaviors. Queer history might question whether modern categories like "trans", "gay" or "lesbian" can be applied to people in the past, or whether doing so erases the specific contemporaneous, historical and cultural meanings of their sexual or gender practices. It seeks to uncover new ways of thinking about sexual and gender diversity that are not limited by present-day definitions and imaginaries.

Aligned with this, queer history might explore temporalities that allow us to think about history in fluid and nonlinear ways, and question ideas of progression narratives from a "repressed" past to a

"liberated" present. In doing so, queer history is often more interested in moments of rupture, discontinuity, and contradiction, showing how past and present understandings of sexuality and gender intersect in complex ways.

The conference *Queer Pasts: What's Queer in Queer History* aims to discuss and critically explore the "queer" in queer and trans history. We invite dialogues about and engagement with methodologies, temporalities, theories and analytical approaches that interpret, imagine and preserve queer and trans history as *queer*.

We invite individual papers and panels including but not limited to explore the following:

- What makes history "queer" beyond the documentation of LGBTQ+ figures and events?
- How can we locate and study queer in historical times, where same-sex relationships and same-sex sexual practices did not have particular names nor carried particular associations with them? How can we locate and study trans in historical times, where trans identities, practices and communities had other names and forms? How can we talk about LGBTQ+ history when historical subjects and societies did not use modern LGBTQ+ identities or terms?
- How can queer historians use archives that reflect oppressive or discriminatory structures (such as medical and criminal records) to tell the stories of queer and trans people? How do we methodologically engage with such archives and how do we tell queer stories of the past without reiterating the violence, inherited in the archive and historical sources?
- How do queer and trans histories intersect with other axes of identity, such as race, class, and disability? How have histories of slavery, colonialism, and imperialism shaped modern understandings of gender and sexuality?
- How can queer history disrupt linear historical narratives that portray progress from repression to liberation? How can we work with queer temporalities in history research?
- How do queer historians address the erasure, silence, and suppression of LGBTQ+ people and communities in archives? How do we provide voice to silenced individuals and groups?

What does a 'queering' of contemporary historical studies and history research entail, for example, queering histories of the welfare state, transnational connections, or popular culture?

- What new historiographical methods and approaches are needed to uncover and accurately represent queer histories? Relatedly, which types of empirical sources can be fruitful to uncover new queer histories? E.g., photographs, fiction literature, folk tales, etc.

Practicalities

Abstracts for individual papers: Send abstract of 300 – 500 words (excl. references) to queerhistoryconference@hum.ku.dk

Panel proposals: Panels should comprise 3-4 individual contributions. Please write a panel rationale (of 300 – 500 words, ex. references) along with 3-4 individual panel paper abstracts (each of 300 – 500 words, ex. references). Send to queerhistoryconference@hum.ku.dk

The conference is organized by the research projects *Queer Women in Denmark in 1870-1920* at Roskilde University and *The Cultural History of AIDS in Denmark* at the University of Copenhagen. Both projects and the joint conference is generously funded by *Independent Research Fund Denmark*.

Funding options: Scholars with limited financial means can apply for scholarships covering conference fee and hotel. Send a one-page motivation to queerhistoryconference@hum.ku.dk

Venues: [University of Copenhagen, Southern Campus](#) and [Roskilde University](#), Denmark.

Conference homepage: koensforskning.ku.dk/queerpasts

Conference email: queerhistoryconference@hum.ku.dk

Dates:

Deadline for abstracts: January 10, 2025.

Letter of acceptance/rejection: late January 2025

Registration opens/ends: late February / late March

Program published: mid-April

Conference: 21-23 May 2025

Organizing committee:

Professor Rikke Andreassen (RUC), Associate Professor Michael Nebeling Petersen (UCPH), Postdoc Marie Lunau (RUC), Postdoc Tobias de Fønss Wung-Sung (UCPH), and Associate Professor Camilla Bruun Eriksen (UCPH).