

Call for Papers

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Forging Credibility: Knowledge, Trust, and Authority in the Premodern World

A conference organised by the Institute of Philosophy
of the Czech Academy of Sciences
Prague, 21–23 September 2026

Research from the last decade clearly shows that questions about who could be considered an authority and what purposes authority served were crucial to intellectual life during the transition from the Middle Ages to the early modern period. Building on these insights, we seek to enrich current debates by focusing on East-Central Europe, a multi-confessional and multi-ethnic region where various scholarly traditions blended and encountered each other, opening up space for a wide range of discussions and disputes about whom to trust. Our conference aims to shed new light on how the credibility of scholars and trust in knowledge were forming and disappearing in this region, particularly in relation to the global contexts at the time.

We welcome submissions that address the following questions, although we do not limit ourselves to them:

- How was scholarly authority expressed and (per)formed during the period of interest? Which fields of knowledge, and which discourses were these representations related to? How were they related to the structures and hierarchies of power at the time, and what was their social, political, and religious impact?
- Did this occur more frequently in specific situations and contexts, whether individual or collective?
- Was authority established differently in specific epistemic genres? Which epistemic performances were used to achieve credibility?
- What conflicts arose over credibility among theory-oriented “guardians and gatekeepers” of scholarship, and hands-on practitioners lacking formal education?
 - What agency did “lay people” exercise against scholarly and scientific authorities?
 - What was distinctive about the formation of scholarly authority and the credibility of knowledge in East-Central Europe? How did this relate to the trans-cultural exchanges of the time, and to the situations in other European region and emerging colonial spaces?
 - How did these processes change between the end of the Middle Ages and the end of the 17th century, for example, in connection with the spread of printing, the emergence of experimental science, and the rise of collaborative knowledge practices?
 - What impact did the rise of vernacular languages and their interaction with Latin have on the formation of scholarly authority?

In addition to individual case studies, comparative and conceptual papers are highly welcome.

The conference will be held in person. The main language of the conference will be English. Proposals are invited for papers dealing with the theme within the period 1400–1700. We welcome submissions of individual proposals for 20-minute papers. Please submit the title of your paper, a 200–300-word abstract, and a one-page CV (incl. your affiliation) in English to the conference organisers (listed below) by **28 February 2026**. Notifications of acceptance will be given by **31 March 2026**.

The keynote lecture will be delivered by **Stefano Gulizia** (Ca' Foscari University in Venice).

The organisers are pleased to provide lunches and a conference dinner for speakers and to recommend suitable accommodation in Prague. There will be no registration fee.

Conference proceedings will be published as one or more thematic issues in international peer-reviewed scholarly journals.

Organising Committee:

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Co-funded by
the European Union

