

Call for papers

Whither Republicanism? Theory and practice in the contemporary Anglosphere

University of Cergy-Pontoise, 10 & 11 May 2019

“Free nations are the best vehicle for expressing the will of the people [...]”¹

In the age of monarchy both the concept and the realisation of republicanism were revolutionary. In the 230 years since the drafting of the US Constitution, the republican model has been adopted and adapted in various forms around the world. This workshop will examine the state of republicanism in the Anglophone world from the perspective of the 21st century. Papers will attempt to address misconceptions or new emphases that may shape the focus of future research into political thought, political action and revolutionary rhetoric associated with republican movements. Questions as to the resilience of republican movements and nations in the face of populist pressures will also be explored.

Though the United Kingdom catalysed many early republican movements it remains a constitutional monarchy while many of its former possessions maintain republican governments. As Brexit approaches, the UK faces a constitutional crisis which may lead to the end of the union with Scotland and alter the UK's current relationship with Northern Ireland. Brexit provides an ideal opportunity to reassess republicanism in the UK. Could parts of the UK become independent republics post-Brexit? Could such a trauma inspire a republican movement in the remaining countries of the UK?

Despite several republican inspired rebellions from 1798 onwards, Ireland only became a republic in 1949. However republicanism, republican thinkers and revolutionaries and the republican ideal form the origin myths of most modern Irish political parties and the Irish state. But in recent years republicanism and the word “Republican” have, both in popular discourse and nomenclature, been co-opted or indeed usurped by revolutionary movements that view the Republic of Ireland as, at best, only partly legitimate.

The Commonwealth includes countries that are federal constitutional monarchies such as Australia and Canada and republics like South Africa, India, Cyprus, Malta etc. What effect will constitutional changes in the UK have on the Commonwealth and especially on the countries that retain constitutional monarchies?

The USA is convulsed in the Age of Trump, a president propelled to power through his effective marshalling of a base that, on the surface at least, idealises the republican doctrine enshrined in the Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution. However it may be

¹ Donald J Trump, Address to joint session of Congress, 28 Feb 2017.

asked whether American republicanism is challenged or enhanced by his populist movement and whether this very populism might lead to outcomes which will undermine the founding principles of the federal republic.

This workshop aims to confront the conceptualisation of republicanism with the diversified realities of the 21st century Anglophone world. To what extent do republicans (and their opponents) in different nations refer to a similar ideal; what theoretical and practical meanings do they ascribe to it? This conference will welcome proposals for papers that explore facets of contemporary republicanism, their relationship to historical republican theory, and their resilience, reconceptualisations or challenges, in any of the English-speaking nations (the United Kingdom or any component thereof, Ireland, the United States, or any of the Commonwealth states).

Prospective participants are invited to submit proposals (i.e., a title and explanatory thematic outline) to co-organisers Frank Rynne (francis.rynne@u-cergy.fr) and Adrien Rodd (adrien.rodd@uvsq.fr) by 21 February at the latest. The workshop, co-organised by the AGORA and CHCSC research laboratories, will be held at the University of Cergy on May 10th, with a possible continuation on May 11th.