

Call for Papers: Masterclass

Where: **University of Erfurt, Germany**

When: **July 10, 2025**

Deadline for submissions: **April 30, 2025**

Truth Politics between Science and Society (1960s– today)

In light of a dwindling public trust in science (Oreskes 2019) and ambiguous calls for a ‘return to truth’ (Cain et al. 2019), understanding the relationship between science and a democratic public, the delineation of appropriate scientific practices, and how to reconcile conflicting interpretations of reality seems to be more relevant than ever. From 1960s counterculture to the 1990s Science Wars and up to today’s (sometimes even official governmental) anti-intellectualism, academic, political, and epistemological debates have been closely interlinked. With a focus on the Science Wars, the masterclass aims to map and historicize the shifting epistemological landscapes from an international perspective informed by methods of Historical and Political Epistemology.

The masterclass is part of the workshop “Truth Politics between Science and Society. Political Epistemologies of the 1990s Science Wars” (July 8-9, 2025). It will be led by Jamie Cohen-Cole (George Washington University), Bernhard Kleeberg (Erfurt University), and Anja Laukötter (Friedrich Schiller University Jena). We invite early career researchers (Master and PhD students) to explore historical debates at the nexus of truth, science, and society.

In line with the perspective of Historical and Political Epistemology, the following questions might be worth considering:

- What were the socio-political effects of deploying scientific concepts, rhetorics, and arguments (e.g. truth, objectivity, rationalism, the scientific method, academic freedom) in particular historical contexts?
- What kind of political and social imaginations about the future of science and the (democratic) public informed these different positions?
- What kinds of subjectivities and narratives about science and society were re-/asserted?

In particular, we invite paper proposals with an international and transnational perspective on the reception of the Science Wars and related debates, as well as similar struggles that played out in different academic cultures and national contexts. Moreover, the role of new channels of communication and media, and how they shaped debates in public-academic arenas represent an important topic to explore.

We invite early career researchers to send a short CV, and a 300-word abstract of their research to forschungsstelle.wahrheit@uni-erfurt.de. The deadline for submission is April 30, 2025. Applicants will be notified of the acceptance of their proposal by mid-May. Accepted participants are required to send in their full paper (about 20 pages) by June 16, 2025. All papers will be pre-circulated and constitute compulsory reading for the masterclass.

The masterclass is jointly organized by the research center “Politics of Truth/Political Epistemologies” at the University of Erfurt, the Lumina Quaeruntur project “‘Images of science’ in Czechoslovakia 1918-1945-1968”, Masaryk Institute and Archives of the CAS Prague, and the GWMT-working group “Political Epistemologies of Central and Eastern Europe” (PECEE). The masterclass will take place at the University of Erfurt, Germany. We will cover travel and accommodation costs for accepted participants.

Organizing Committee:

Martin Babička, D.Phil., Institute of Contemporary History, Czech Academy of Sciences, Prague

Johanna Hügel, History of Science, University of Erfurt

Erik Kaiser, M.A., History of Science, University of Erfurt

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