



The Many Faces of the Right:

Intellectual Traditions and Contemporary Transformations

Online Seminar - Fridays from 10.00 a.m. to 11.30 a.m.



The seminar formerly entitled “Liberalism and Conservatism at a Crossroads: Exploring the Notion of Society and the Individual, 19th-21st Centuries” **will resume in the 2026-2027 academic year** under a new title:

“The Many Faces of the Right: Intellectual Traditions and Contemporary Transformations”.

The new title reflects the intellectual development of the seminar since its launch in September 2022. Initially conceived as a space for examining the interactions, convergences, and tensions between liberalism and conservatism from the nineteenth century to the present, the seminar has progressively broadened its scope. While liberalism and conservatism remain central to its concerns, the seminar now seeks to explore the plurality of traditions, doctrines, political languages, and institutional practices that have shaped the right in the Anglophone world and beyond.

This change of title is therefore not a change of object, but an expansion of perspective. The seminar continues to examine the relationship between liberalism and conservatism, but it now places that relationship within a wider constellation of right-wing traditions and transformations. This broader perspective also reflects the ongoing evolution of the right across the Anglophone world. Conservative, liberal, neoliberal, national-populist, radical right, religious, constitutional, authoritarian, libertarian, and social forms of right-wing thought may overlap, coexist, enter into conflict, or be strategically rearticulated according to changing historical and political contexts.

Launched in September 2022 as a joint initiative of the AGORA research centre, CY Cergy Paris Université, and the ICD research centre, University of Tours, the seminar expanded in 2024 to include BABEL, University of Toulon, CREW, Sorbonne Nouvelle, and TIL, Université Bourgogne Europe. This year, the seminar team is very happy to welcome Emma Bell, Professor of British Politics at Sorbonne Université, where she is a member of HDEA.

The seminar brings together scholars in civilisation studies, intellectual history, political science, history, philosophy, economics, sociology, and related fields. It remains grounded in the intellectual history of political and economic thought, while also opening onto the study of social practices, public policies, institutional change, and contemporary forms of governance.

Its aim is to understand how key political concepts such as liberty, order, authority, responsibility, society, the individual, sovereignty, the general interest, merit, tradition, nation, and the State have been mobilised, transformed, and contested by different traditions of the right. Particular attention is paid to the tension between the general interest and individual interest, especially as it appears in party politics, public policy, and ideological discourse. This tension provides a critical entry point into broader debates on social responsibility, solidarity and autonomy, the role of the State, intermediate institutions, civil society, and the moral foundations of political life.

The seminar also examines the ways in which older intellectual traditions are reactivated in contemporary political debates. It explores both long-term genealogies and present-day transformations, asking how ideas inherited from liberalism and conservatism are redeployed in relation to issues such as populism, nationalism, neoliberal reform, social policy, education, public morality, constitutionalism, identity, sovereignty, and the crisis of representative politics.

By adopting the title “The Many Faces of the Right”, the seminar seeks to construct a critical mapping of right-wing political languages and traditions. It aims to analyse their historical roots, their conceptual transformations, their internal tensions, and their strategic uses in contemporary public controversies.

For the 2026-2027 academic year, sessions will take place on

Fridays from 10.00 a.m. to 11.30 a.m.

The seminar will be held fully online, with the exception of the inaugural session on 25 September 2026, which will take place in hybrid format, both online and at the Maison de la Recherche of Sorbonne Nouvelle.

Programme 2026-2027

25 September 2026 - Christopher Fear, University of Hull, “Inside Right: Conservatism versus Faragism in the 2020s”

Hybrid session: online and at the Maison de la Recherche, Sorbonne Nouvelle

Abstract: This paper presents an examination of the performance and strategy of the British Conservative Party during a period of significant political challenge from Reform UK, the latest incarnation of “Faragism”. The paper explicates the chief characteristics of Faragism and lays out the nature of the challenge that Reform UK presents to the Conservative Party under present conditions. It also offers some analysis of how and why the Conservative Party has failed to meet these challenges, including at the level of local politics. Finally, the paper closes with some suggestions for a more successful strategy.

Biography: Dr Christopher Fear is a Lecturer in Politics and International Relations at the University of Hull, where he also directs the Centre for Conservatism.

27 November 2026 - Axel Bercq, University of Toulon, “The end of the broad church? The impact of post-referendum factionalism on the Conservative Party”

Abstract: The years between the 2016 Referendum and the UK’s exit from the EU in 2020 were marked by the creation of several intra-party groups in the Conservative Party. The groups, mostly created by Brexiteers, reflected some Conservative MPs’ fear that the party would not make the most of the opportunities offered by Brexit and would renege on its pre-Brexit commitments. All the groups created during this period, whether the Common Sense Group (CSG), the Net Zero Scrutiny Group (NZSG), the New Conservatives (NC) or the Covid Recovery Group (CRG), attempted to steer the party towards a tougher and more entrenched right-wing stance, both in economic and cultural/social matters. Kemi Badenoch’s announcements since the 2025 Conservative Party Conference – that the party would commit to leave the ECHR, abandon net-zero targets and reject candidates not supporting the party line, and save billions in public spending by cutting budgets related to welfare and immigration – illustrate the party’s post-Brexit rightward shift. This paper uses interviews conducted with Conservative MPs and seeks to analyse the impact of intra-party groups on the incarnation of the post-Brexit Conservative Party. It argues that rather than being the root causes of the party’s tougher line, the activities of intra-party groups operating between 2016 and 2020 can be understood as symptoms of a shift already underway before Brexit.

Biography: Axel Bercq is a PhD student at the University of Toulon. His thesis, supervised by Professor Karine Tournier-Sol, is entitled “Factionalism and power struggles in the Conservative Party in the pre- and post-Brexit period”.

29 January 2027 - Virgile Lorenzoni, Aix-Marseille University, “Eternal rebels”: British and American conservative think tanks in a post-liberal age”

Abstract: This paper proposes a counter-intuitive examination of the “revolutionary” nature of conservative thought and action, through the example of the British and American think tanks that accompanied the rise of the New Right, as well as that of their contemporary counterparts. While conservatism is often reduced to the defense of a given group’s monopoly on power or resources, it may be analysed as a complex ideology, functioning as a succession of “counter-movements” against perceived hegemonic threats to a “natural” order, potentially justifying radical measures [Mannheim 1927; Huntington 1957; Freedman 1996; Robin 2011]. Indeed, the think tanks accompanying the Reagan-Thatcher “revolutions” waged a crusade for “economic freedom”, aiming to overturn the postwar consensus and restore the “spontaneous order” of the market [Cockett; Wellings; Stahl]. They cast themselves as “eternal rebels” assimilating and promoting marginal neoliberal ideas despite early failures and transatlantic imbalances [Stedman-Jones 2012].

Their gradual institutionalisation, however, turned yesterday’s “rebels” into the promoters of a new neoliberal consensus [Slobodian 2018; Djelic 2020]. This raises the question of whether this signals their impending decline, as new Anglo-American right-wing organisations emerge, positioning themselves as a fresh rebellion, built largely on an outright rejection of liberalism in all its forms.

Biography: Virgile Lorenzoni is a lecturer in British and American civilisation at Aix-Marseille University. His PhD thesis focused on British and American conservative think tanks from a transnational perspective after 1945. His research interests include the study of conservatism as a political ideology, the reconfigurations of Anglo-American conservative thought, and the networks that contribute to the circulation and influence of these ideas across the Atlantic and beyond.

19 March 2027 - Théo Aiolfi, “The Far Right at Crossroads: Walking the Tightrope between Transgression and Normalisation”

Abstract: Throughout Europe and beyond, never have far-right political forces been more influential. Whether they are extreme movements gathering thousands of protesters in a so-called “existential struggle” against Islam and immigration, online influencers defending traditional masculinity and whiteness, or radical-right parties that are either in power or on the brink of gaining it, the far right in all its forms is gaining traction in the public debate. In this seminar, we will discuss the tension facing the main representatives of far-right parties, between maintaining the transgressive *ethos* at the core of their populist style and softening their image through tactics of normalisation to widen their appeal. In the end, this tightrope between radicality and acceptability may paradoxically work hand in hand to building their electoral success.

Biography: Théo Aiolfi is a junior professor at the University of Burgundy, as part of the *Centre Interlangues Texte, Image, Langage*. He is also a senior fellow at the Brussels Institute of Advanced Studies (BrIAS) and an associate researcher of the research group Echo: Media, Culture and Politics at the *Vrije Universiteit Brussel* (VUB). His research interests include populism, performativity, style and politics as performance

21 May 2027 - Clémence Fourton, Gustave-Eiffel University, “The only yet variegated game in town: a brief history of British neoliberalism”

Abstract: Despite regular proclamations of its demise, neoliberalism endures, both in its “actually existing” forms and as a “rascal concept” (Peck 2023). In British economic and political life, its having been the main game in town for the past fifty(ish) years does not mean that neoliberalism hasn’t evolved in time, differed in space, been challenged across time and space. Similarly, recognizing the usefulness of neoliberalism as a concept for critical political economy does not exempt one from attempting historicized, granular studies of neoliberalism. This paper therefore offers a (very) brief history of British neoliberalism which insists on its variegation. It does so by tracing some of its core contradictions over time and space: state roll-back vs. state roll-out; crises as default vs. crises as exceptions; consensual vs. contested politics. Case studies will be taken from various areas of social policy – health, social care, transport – to highlight the dual nature of British neoliberalism, both coherent and manifold.

Biography: Clémence Fourton is a Lecturer in British studies at Gustave-Eiffel University. Her work focuses on social policy in contemporary Britain. She has notably published papers on Covid-19 and the welfare state (*Review of Radical Political Economics* and *Angles*) and regularly appears on French media for research dissemination.

Further details concerning the programme and the online access link will be circulated progressively during the academic year.

All seminar talks since 2022 are available on the YouTube channel of the AGORA research centre: <https://www.youtube.com/@laboratoireagora5949/videos>

Seminar team: **Emma Bell**, HDEA, Sorbonne Université; **Nathalie Anna Champroux**, ICD, University of Tours; **Laurence Harris**, CREW, Sorbonne Nouvelle; **Catherine Marshall**, AGORA, CY Cergy Paris Université; **Stéphane Porion**, ICD, Université de Tours; **Stéphane Revillet**, TIL, University of Bourgogne Europe; and **Karine Tournier-Sol**, BABEL, University of Toulon.