

Summer school
Padova, 22-26 June 2026

Centre-peripheries. Venice and the Terraferma during the 16th century through literature, art, architecture and history

Curated by the permanent laboratory Unil-Unipd
Arte, letteratura e storia nel Rinascimento italiano

Art. 1 Theme

The summer school aims to provide PhD candidates and students with an updated perspective on centre–periphery dynamics and on polycentrism in the Italian Renaissance, bringing together three disciplinary fields: political-institutional history, art and architectural history, and literary history. Against Vasari’s Florence-centred interpretation, art historians have progressively developed an awareness of the polycentrism inherent in artistic development in Italy, «caratterizzato il più delle volte da molteplicità e non da mancanza di contatti», also as a consequence of the country’s geographical configuration (Castelnuovo, Ginzburg 2019 [1979], p. 17; see Campbell 2019, chap. 1 *Off the Axis. The Renaissance without Vasari*; Aikema 2021). The same cannot be said unequivocally for literary history: despite the lesson of Carlo Dionisotti, expressed in numerous essays and in the collection emblematically entitled *Geografia e storia della letteratura italiana* (1967), in at least some areas of scholarship attention to this specificity has diminished over the decades. One need only think of sixteenth-century poetry: the widespread phenomenon of Petrarchism led to a flattening – if not outright neglect – of the contexts in which it was produced and of the stylistic peculiarities of individual poetic figures. An attempt to recover this perspective is represented by the *Atlante della letteratura italiana* (De Vincentiis 2010), whose authors nevertheless feel the need to classify each period under a centre – for example, the years 1494-1530 are defined as “The Age of Venice”. In the belief that not only the comparison between different cultural and artistic products but also familiarity with the methodological perspectives developed in different critical traditions are necessary for a better understanding of the Italian Renaissance, as well as for broadening and refining the tools and knowledge acquired in the course of study, the organisers have decided to propose as the theme of the school the relationship between centres and peripheries through the specific case of Venice and the mainland dominions (Terraferma) in the sixteenth century, both because of the prominent role of the Serenissima and because of the possibility of carrying out activities on site.

In an essay published in 1987 (but see already *Geografia e storia* of 1967), Dionisotti clearly focused on the issues evoked above, asserting that in order to understand Giorgione’s work (and the absence of news concerning his death in Venice) it was necessary to draw up «un bilancio dei rapporti, non soltanto artistici, ma anche e anzitutto politici e letterari, fra Venezia e Ferrara, bilancio analogo a quello più sopra accennato fra Venezia e Mantova», referring to the transfer of the Paduan Mantegna to the court of Isabella d’Este, and noting «il diverso peso strategico che nei due ordini di rapporti ebbe allora Padova» (Dionisotti 1995, p. 113). In the following pages the duty of the historian was therefore formulated through a now famous metaphor: the historian «non può contentarsi degli alberi [i.e. *Asolani e Polifilo*]. Deve osservare d’vicino il sottobosco» (*ibid.*, p. 115). This meant not only directing attention to minor and very minor figures, but also widening the gaze to the peripheries of the system, in a historical-geographical as well as artistic-literary sense.

Similar and more general problems were addressed by Enrico Castelnuovo and Carlo Ginzburg (2019 [1979]), starting from a re-examination of Lanzi’s *Storia pittorica*, which had greatly contributed to the development of an awareness of the connection between centres of power and artistic schools – and it was not by chance that Dionisotti acknowledged the superiority of Lanzi’s work over the literary history written by Tiraboschi. Castelnuovo and Ginzburg, indeed, drawing on Lanzi’s notion of “competition”, insisted on two fundamental elements absent from his analysis, since he had underestimated the value of production in the peripheries: on the one hand, «la presenza simultanea in una serie di centri urbani di un potere comunale e di un potere vescovile, talvolta alleati, più spesso in contrasto, che diedero luogo a una duplice, alternativa committenza laica ed ecclesiastica, di durata non episodica»; on the other, «l’exasperata tensione municipalistica, esplosa in età comunale con particolare violenza ma destinata a durare molto più a lungo, che costituì una spinta fortissima alla diversificazione artistica» (*ibid.*, p. 41). From this derived a different definition of the artistic centre, which would not be determined exclusively by the concentration of artists but «potrà essere *soltanto* un centro di potere extrartistico: politico e/o economico e/o religioso» (*ibid.*, p. 43, emphasis added). This definition proved functional to a reconsideration of the «rapporto

invariabile tra innovazione e ritardo», between centre and periphery, in mobile terms (*ibid.*, pp. 46-47), and to a reinterpretation of Vasari. Such an operation allowed Castelnovo and Ginzburg to offer a different interpretation of the artistic and political dynamics between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, identifying three decisive factors in the *process of peripheralisation* then under way: «a) la costituzione di dinastie locali con il conseguente perpetuarsi, attraverso l'uso di cartoni e disegni, di certi schemi; b) lo stabilirsi in periferia di artisti di lontana provenienza che non si erano imposti né nei rispettivi paesi d'origine, né nei centri artistici più importanti; c) il rifluire in periferia di artisti già celebri messi in crisi dai mutamenti stilistici in atto» (*ibid.*, p. 60). At the same time, the scholars affirmed the sometimes positive value of the periphery, not only as a place of «casi di resistenza individuale che, di fronte a un centro che non lascia spazio alla diversità, riescono a trovare uno sbocco», but also as a site of divergences, alternatives and oppositions to certain models that become the prevailing trend in a given area (*ibid.*, p. 119). Finally, the analysis of Ginzburg and Castelnovo concluded by opening the discussion to a broader context, namely the relationship between the Italian states, Europe and its centres, thus projecting the problems addressed into a further dimension in which politics acquires an even greater weight in artistic and literary development, particularly in a period of upheaval such as the Renaissance.

A great deal of scholarship has been produced on these questions over the last two decades, although it has not always been accompanied by an equally explicit methodological reflection. An important exception is the recent monograph by Stephen J. Campbell (2019), significantly entitled *The Endless Periphery. Towards a Geopolitics of Art in Lorenzo Lotto's Italy*, which analyses the paradigmatic case of Lorenzo Lotto's career, also discussed in the volume by Castelnovo and Ginzburg. Particularly noteworthy is the redefinition of centres, drawing on the work of David Summers, as «mixed places», that is, «meeting places rather than as always already coherent, as open rather than bounded, as ongoing production rather than the pre-given [...] [which] acquire identity not through organic, autochthonous traditions and internalized history but through their construction as a locus in much larger and far-reaching chains of social relations» (Campbell 2019, p. 36). In this sense it becomes possible to reconstruct a relational geography of sixteenth-century artistic production, attentive to the mobility of its actors (politicians, diplomats, ecclesiastics, artists, artisans, etc.) and capable of restoring the complexity of relations. Moreover, Campbell's merit lies in having emphasised the constructive value of works of art in terms of identity: «thinking of places as performed and practiced [...] [as] the raw material for the creative production of identity rather than a priori label of identity ... Place in this sense becomes an event rather than a secure ontological thing rooted in notions of the authentic [...]» (*ibid.*, p. 43).

The summer school intends to address these and other methodological questions through the study of concrete cultural products (from painting to architecture, from historiography to orations, to poetry, etc.) and specific phenomena (the circulation of information, the public representation of power, etc.). For this reason, it will alternate lectures by specialists in the field with presentations of ongoing research by the participants and workshop sessions held in libraries, museums and buildings of historical and artistic interest in the cities of Padua and Venice.

Bibliography

C. Dionisotti, *Geografia e storia della letteratura italiana*, Torino, Einaudi, 1967 • C. Dionisotti, *Appunti su arti e lettere*, Milano, Jaca Book, 1995 • S.J. Campbell, *The Endless Periphery. Towards a Geopolitics of Art in Lorenzo Lotto's Italy*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2019 • E. Castelnovo, C. Ginzburg, *Centro e periferia nella storia dell'arte italiana*, Milano, Officina Libraria, 2019 [ed. 1979] • M. Tafuri, *Venezia e il Rinascimento. Religione, scienza, architettura*, Macerata, Quodlibet, 2024 • C. Revest, L. Špoljarić, *Introduction: Renaissance Humanism and the Venetian Empire* e G. Florio, *Between Law and Custom: Praising the Prince and Representing Subjecthood in Early Modern Venice*, in «Renaissance Studies», special issue 2025 • *Storia dell'architettura nel Veneto. Il Cinquecento*, a cura di D. Battilotti, G. Beltramini, E. Demo, W. Panciera, Venezia, Marsilio, 2016 • B. Aikema, *I Rinascimenti in Europa 1480-1620. Arte, geografia e potere*, Milano, Libri Scheiwiller, 2021 • *Atlante della letteratura italiana*, a cura di S. Luzzato e G. Pedullà, *I Dalle origini al Rinascimento*, a cura di A. de Vincentiis, Torino, Einaudi, 2010 • *Il Rinascimento a Brescia. Moretto, Romanino, Savoldo. 1512-1552*, a cura di R. D'Adda, F. Piazza, E. Valseriati, Milano, Skira, 2024 • *Tra Venezia e l'Impero. Dissenso e conflitto politico a Brescia nell'età di Carlo V*, Milano, FrancoAngeli, 2016 • S. Toffolo, *Describing the City, Describing the State. Representations of Venice and the Venetian Terraferma in the Renaissance*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2020 • G. Florio, *Micropolitica della rappresentanza. Dinamiche del potere a Venezia in età moderna*, Roma, Carocci, 2023 • *L'architettura del Rinascimento. Storia e geografia*, a cura di F. Mattei, Roma, Carocci, 2026 • *Geografia e storia della tradizione lirica nell'Italia del Cinquecento*, a cura di S. Albonico, n. monografico di «ItaliQue», 27 (2024).

Art. 2 Learning Objectives

The main objective of the summer school is to provide and/or strengthen certain fundamental research perspectives in the humanities, starting from the centre-periphery framework and from the interdisciplinary dimension of historical research. By the end of the course, participants will have acquired a solid familiarity with the most recent and methodologically sound reflections on how to take the geographical component into account in the analysis of different cultural products, as well as with a number of paradigmatic case studies (Carpaccio, Titian, Venetian poets, etc.). This will enable PhD candidates to enrich their own research with new perspectives, including interdisciplinary ones, and to establish contacts with scholars

working in other fields. The lectures will focus primarily on the case of Venice and its mainland dominions (Terraferma). At the same time, attention to other case studies will be constantly encouraged, and during the workshop sessions participants will be able to choose the topics they wish to work on according to their own interests and areas of expertise.

Art. 3 Target Participants and Admission Requirements

The activity is intended for PhD candidates and students who are writing their Master's thesis at Italian, Swiss, or international universities and who meet the following requirements:

- enrolment in a doctoral programme in Linguistic, Philological and Literary Studies, Historical, Geographical and Anthropological Studies, History, Criticism and Conservation of Cultural Heritage (UNIPD), or in Italian Studies, History of Art and Architecture, History (UNIL), as well as equivalent programmes at other universities;
- enrolment in a Master's programme in the above-mentioned fields and the commencement of the thesis/*mémoire*, to be certified by a letter from the thesis supervisor.

Given the methodological orientation of the activity, candidates who are *not* currently conducting research on the Renaissance but who are interested in the topic are also eligible for admission to the summer school.

Applicants must meet the requirements specified in this call at the time of submitting their application.

If the number of applications exceeds the number of available places, applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- assessment of the academic record and curriculum (Bachelor's degree mark; grade average; documented periods of study abroad; possible publications);
- assessment of the motivation letter.

Preference will also be given, in descending order of priority, to:

- PhD candidates from the University of Padua and the Université de Lausanne;
- Master's students meeting the above requirements from UNIPD and UNIL;
- PhD candidates from other universities;
- students from other universities.

The selection will be carried out by the organisers of the summer school:

Franco Tomasi, Federica Toniolo, Lucio Biasiori (UNIPD), Nicolas Bock, Amelia Juri, Simone Albonico (UNIL).

Art. 4 Organisation of the Summer School

The summer school will take place from Monday morning to Friday at midday.

It includes six lectures lasting 1 hour and 30 minutes each (discussion included), scheduled on the mornings of Monday, Tuesday and Thursday (beginning at 9:00 a.m.), as well as workshop activities and visits.

The lectures will be delivered by faculty members from the universities of Padua and Lausanne, as well as by external speakers.

Programme

Monday

9.00-12.30

Welcome and introduction

Lesson 1, **Enrico Valseriati** (Università degli Studi di Padova), *Policentrismi e mosaici di giurisdizioni. Per una lettura non lineare dell'entroterra veneziano nell'età del Rinascimento*

Lesson 2, **Amelia Juri** (Université de Fribourg, Université de Lausanne), *Dalla Terraferma (e oltre). La poesia per la Serenissima tra manoscritti e stampati (1494-1538)*

Discussion

14.00-16.00

Laboratory curated by **Nicolas Bock** (Université de Lausanne), **Franco Tomasi** (Università degli Studi di Padova), **Amelia Juri** (Université de Fribourg, Université de Lausanne), **Lucio Biasiori** (Università degli Studi di Padova)

20.00

Social dinner

Tuesday

9.00-13.00

Lesson 3, **Sarah Ferrari** (Università degli Studi di Padova), *Tiziano e la Terraferma: genesi, evoluzione ed eredità di un nuovo linguaggio figurativo*

Lesson 4, **Guido Beltramini** (Centro internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio), *Tempi di reazione nell'architettura padovana all'affermarsi di una lingua 'all'antica' (1521-1537)*

Discussion

Visit of the **Sala dei Giganti** curated by **Sarah Ferrari** (Università degli Studi di Padova)

14.30-17.00

Visit of the **Scuola del Santo** and **Odeo Cornaro** curated by **Sarah Ferrari** (Università degli Studi di Padova)

Wednesday

9.00-12.30

Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venezia, *workshop* curated by **Federica Toniolo** (Università degli Studi di Padova) and **Amelia Juri** (Université de Fribourg, Université de Lausanne)

14.00-17.00

Visit of the **Gallerie dell'Accademia** and **Chiesa di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari**, curated by **Sarah Ferrari** (Università degli Studi di Padova)

Thursday

9.00-12.30

Lesson 5, **Simone Albonico** (Université de Lausanne, Sapienza Università di Roma), *Politica in versi tra laguna e Terraferma nelle rime di Agostino Beaziano*

Lesson 6, **Giovanni Florio** (Università degli Studi di Padova), *Rappresentare Padova nella Venezia del Cinquecento: istituzioni e pratiche*

Discussion

Free after-noon

Friday

9.00-12.30

Laboratory curated by **Nicolas Bock** (Université de Lausanne), **Franco Tomasi** (Università degli Studi di Padova), **Amelia Juri** (Université de Fribourg, Université de Lausanne), **Lucio Biasiori** (Università degli Studi di Padova)

Final discussion

Monday afternoon and Friday morning will be devoted to workshop sessions during which significant case studies will be presented and topics assigned for a short group research project to be presented on Friday morning. Possible topics may include, for example, the historiographical, literary and artistic representation of a specific historical event or figure.

The main languages of the activities will be **Italian** and **English**, but participants will be allowed to use **other languages** where necessary, with mediation between speakers if required.

The minimum **number of participants** required for the summer school to take place is **10**, and the maximum number is **15**.

Art. 5 Application for Admission

Those wishing to apply for admission to the thematic summer school must submit their application **no later than 15 April 2026**, sending the required documents to Dr Amelia Juri (amelia.juri@unil.ch). The results will be communicated to all applicants **by the end of April at the latest**.

The application must include the following documents, without which the application cannot be considered:

- copy of a valid identity document;
- *curriculum vitae*;
- self-certification of enrolment in a doctoral programme or Master's programme;

- official transcript of examinations taken (transcript of records) for PhD candidates; self-certification of examinations taken, including dates and grades, for students;
- motivation letter (maximum 2 pages);
- letter from the thesis supervisor for Master's students (the letter must certify that the candidate is writing the thesis under the supervision of the professor and indicate the topic of the work).

Applications submitted after the deadline or in a manner different from that indicated in this article will not be considered, except in the case of duly documented force majeure.

False statements and misrepresentations are punishable under the Italian Criminal Code and the relevant special legislation (Articles 75 and 76 of Presidential Decree 445/2000). UNIPD may at any time during the procedure, including after the start of the summer school, verify the truthfulness of the statements made and the documents submitted and may request the presentation of the original documents. In the event of false declarations, UNIPD may, by reasoned decree of the Director, exclude the candidates, without prejudice to any criminal liability arising therefrom.

Art. 6 Coverage of Expenses

The summer school does not require the payment of a registration fee and will cover the following expenses: lunches from Monday to Friday; the social dinner (Monday evening); the excursion to Venice; admission tickets for all visits. Furthermore, UniPd will arrange accommodation (single room or double room for single use in an agreed upon hotel) and will cover the costs up to 350 EUR per person for participants who are **not** based at the University of Padua. Any costs exceeding this amount will be borne by the participants, as will the travel expenses to and from Padua and the evening meals (except the Monday dinner).

The possibility of obtaining additional funding for travel (and accommodation) for **Swiss** PhD candidates and students is currently being examined. Applicants will be informed of any developments.

Art. 7 Certificate

Participants who have attended at least 80% of the activities will receive a certificate of participation issued by UNIPD and UNIL, valid within the limits provided by law and indicating the number of CFU/ECTS credits obtained.