

Monday, 11.12.2023; 4:15 - 6:00 pm CET

Kate Cooper, Royal Holloway, University of London, UK

**Queens of a Fallen World: Slavery, Freedom, and Women's Agency in Augustine's Confessions**

Abstract:

Augustine's *Confessions* offer a rare glimpse into the life behind closed doors of a family in fourth-century Roman Africa. Perhaps the most surprising aspect of the narrative is the attention Augustine pays to the lives of people who are not normally recognized as subjects of historical writing: women, children, and the enslaved. In this talk, we will explore the stories which Augustine tells of how these historical actors claimed agency in the face of the constraints imposed by gender, legal standing, and social class.

Bio:

Kate Cooper is an ancient historian whose work on religion, gender, and the household in the Roman period has changed how we see late antiquity and the rise of Christianity. Born in Washington, DC, Kate moved to the UK after undergraduate studies at Wesleyan University, and post-graduate studies at Harvard Divinity School and Princeton University. She is Professor of History at Royal Holloway, University of London.

Kate's published writing explores the world of the Mediterranean in the Roman period, with a special interest in daily life and the family, religion, gender, and social identity, and the inter-connected problems of martyrdom, resistance movements, and religious violence. Her books include *The Virgin and The Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity* (Harvard), *The Fall of the Roman Household* (Cambridge), *Band of Angels: The Forgotten World of Early Christian Women* (Atlantic Books), and most recently *Queens of a Fallen World: The Lost Women of Augustine's Confessions* (Basic Books), which was a finalist for the 2023 Cundill Prize.