

[CFP for 2024 John Patrick Diggins memorial conference](#)

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Type:

Call for Papers

Date:

January 17, 2023 to March 31, 2023

Location:

New York, United States

Subject Fields:

American History / Studies, Intellectual History

In honor of the 40th anniversary of John Patrick Diggins' landmark works, *The Lost Soul of American Politics* and "The Oyster and the Pearl: The Problem of Contextualism in Intellectual History," the Ph.D. Program in History at the CUNY Graduate Center will host a one-day conference on the theme of origins as a problem in intellectual history and for historians more broadly. The conference will be held at the Graduate Center in March of 2024 (precise date to be determined.) In recent years, origins have become newly controversial among historians and in the public sphere - in battles over the relevance and meaning of first or founding moments, of "originalism" as a mode of constitutional argument, and in renewed debate about what "presentism" is and when it is or is not a problem. Yet for intellectual historians, questions of origin are, if anything, fundamental to the enterprise of investigating how ideas matter in history. In other words, whether stated or not, establishing intellectual origins has often been a central work that intellectual historians do for each other and for historical narratives of many kinds. How are historians thinking about ideas in relation to origins now? Does this vary across geographical and temporal fields, and in different traditions and different objects of inquiry, and why? Do origins stories still hold out special promise, duties, or opportunities for intellectual history? What role have origins stories, and ways of analyzing them, played in the continuing evolution of boundaries between history and other disciplines when it comes to scholarship about ideas in the past and present? In the spirit of Diggins' broad interests and body of work, we welcome proposals for case studies, methodological inquiries, and historiographical considerations in any field of history. Proposals should be 500-1000 words and should be sent to Helena Rosenblatt (hrosenblatt@gc.cuny.edu) by March 31, 2023. Please put "Diggins Conference" in the subject box. Travel funding will be available. We expect that papers will be pre-circulated as well as presented in brief at the conference. Publication of a volume arising from the project is anticipated.

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