Call for papers
“We are all servants” -- The Diversity of Service in Premodern Europe
International Conference, 20-22 September 2019
to be held at the Centre for Medieval Studies
University of Toronto, downtown campus

Organized by Elisheva Baumgarten and Isabelle Cochelin
with Lochin Brouillard and Emma Gabe

Scientific Advisory Board:
Elisheva Carlebach, Konrad Eisenbichler,
Antoinette Fauve-Chamoux and Diane Wolfthal

If you would like to participate, please send the following information to Servants2019@gmail.com before January 3rd, 2019:
your name, university, title of paper, 150 word abstract,
contact info (address, email and telephone), one page CV,
and finally a short biographical blurb (the latter for the session chairs).

Service in premodern Europe was a ubiquitous phenomenon in daily life but also constituted a key concept for defining relationships between individuals. Servants were men or women, high or low on the social scale, poor or wealthy, children or elderly, of different faiths (Christian, Jewish or Muslim), and with few or great expectations for their future. For some, service was a lifetime occupation but for many a finite period in their life cycle. Even kings considered
themselves to be servants in relation to God. In contrast with the diversity and pervasiveness of service in the past, few today would consider themselves the servant of another.

The project for this conference is therefore timely and innovative on many fronts. Our approach seeks to conceive the history of service in the longue durée, starting around 1000, when primary sources become more abundant (thanks to the increasing reliance on written texts) and ending before the turning point of the late seventeenth century, when the conception of service changed significantly. Our research will thus cover the medieval period for which no overall study on service exists so far. We will use an interdisciplinary methodology and bring together scholars from different fields (History, Literature and Art History, but also Religious Studies, Anthropology, and History of Architecture) and with complementary areas of geographical and chronological focus. In addition, we will take into account religion, which has been very little considered so far in the studies concerning service, even though any discourse on service in these centuries was steeped in religious imagery. For this reason, we will consider the Christian, Jewish and (when and where relevant also) Muslim communities of medieval and early modern Europe side by side. Finally, our approach will be both empirical and theoretical: we intend to examine service as a socio-historical reality and as a concept to define human relationships and work relations, a joint approach which has never been adopted in previous scholarship.

**Main themes:**
- Domestic servants in distinct surroundings (urban context, rural context, and within castles)
- Service in different religious groups (Catholic, Jewish, Protestant, etc.), including service when the servant is of a different religious faith than the masters
- Service in various religious sources and servants working for religious individuals or communities (theology and canon law; exempla literature in Latin and Hebrew; servants of secular clergy and in monasteries)
- Servants in art
- Service in literary sources
- Service as a model for human relationships, including service as work, or rather work conceived as service
- Service and issues of gender, sexualities, and kinship
- Service, race and migration
- Spatial distribution of servants within the households
- Service as opposed to slavery

**Main disciplines:** Social History, Religious History, Art History, History of Law, Theology, Literature, Economic History, History of Architecture, and Anthropology