

Dear Colleagues and Students,

You are kindly invited to the seminar titled “Byzantine Gender: Nature and Effort in the Pursuit of Masculinity,” organized jointly by the Department of History and the Program in Cultures, Civilizations, and Ideas.

Date: 05 May 2026, Tuesday

Time: 16.30

Avenue: A-130

Title: Byzantine Gender: Nature and Effort in the Pursuit of Masculinity

Speaker: Leonora Neville, University of Wisconsin-Madison

Abstract: Byzantine ideas about anthropology, ethics, and sexuality created a gender culture unlike that of many modern societies. While certain ideas about the capabilities and merits of men and women seem familiar, Byzantine gender had different underlying structures based on ancient Greek ideas about nature and human ethical self-determination. These ancient ideas about the nature of men and women were affected by Christianity but remained functional far into the Middle Ages. For Byzantine people, this cultural heritage created the belief that they could control the degree of masculinity or femininity they displayed through their ethical character. We can better understand Byzantines when we interpret their culture in light of these inherited ideas about gender.

Bio: Leonora Neville is the John and Jeanne Rowe Professor of Byzantine History and Vilas Distinguished Achievement Professor at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Her research focuses on gender, civic religion, historical memory and historiography. She is a Senior Fellow at Dumbarton Oaks and an editor of several book series, including *Cambridge Elements in Rethinking Byzantium*, Palgrave’s *New Approaches to Byzantine History and Culture*, and Arc Medieval Press’s *Long Roman Empire*. She is the author of several monographs, most notably *Anna Komnene: The Life and Work of a Medieval Historian*, *Byzantine Gender*, and *Guide to Byzantine Historical Writing*.