

Call for Abstracts

Utopias of Work: Historical Perspectives

University of Groningen

Conference Dates: **October 22-23, 2026**

CFA Deadline: **April 15, 2026**

Recent changes in the world of work – changes such as growing precarity in people’s access to the goods of work, the rise of platform work, the resurgent popularity of the ideal of productive self-sufficiency, and the unequal impact of automation and AI – have renewed interest in how work might be valued, compensated, and organized differently. The moral issues raised by these changes are not new, however, and we would benefit from revisiting the long history of thinking about ideals of work and its place in the good life. This conference turns to the history of philosophy and political economy for utopian and radical perspectives on work. We will explore how philosophers and political economists from Plato to Gandhi saw the rational or democratic organization of firms, unions, and labor markets as means of advancing justice, freedom, and virtue at work. In particular, we are interested in insights from these figures that might help to address today’s injustices surrounding work. The conference will conclude with a panel on the overall relevance of returning to utopian and revolutionary thinkers from our past. What (if anything) can we learn from them for the 21st century?

Keynote Speakers:

- [Michelle C. Smith](#) (English, Clemson)

- [David Leopold](#) (Political Theory, Oxford)
- [Laurence Davis](#) (Government and Politics, University College Cork)
- [Susanna de Beer](#) (Classical Antiquity, Groningen; Leiden)

Submission Guidelines

- Each talk will be allotted a total of 40 minutes (approx. 25 minute presentation, 15 minute Q&A)
- Please send abstracts of **no more than 300 words** to t.c.re@rug.nl by **April 15, 2026**. We will respond with decisions by May 20th, 2026.

The conference will focus on three major themes:

- Worker rights and worker control
- Critiques of domestic labor and domestic servitude
- The duty to work from a utopian perspective

We welcome submissions on any utopian or radical historical figure or movement that addresses one or more of these themes. That could include:

- Labor, the good life, and the just society in ancient philosophy, for example: the division of labor in Plato's Republic; Aristotle on work, politics, and leisure; Aristophanes' Assemblywomen
- Utopian socialism in the 19th century, including Babeuf, Saint Simon, Owen, Fourier, etc.
- Feminist proposals for rethinking domestic labor, or the place of social reproduction in the rational society more generally, such as in Kollontai and Tristan
- Russian radicals and utopians, such as: Nikolay Chernyshevsky, Peter Kropotkin, Alexander Bogdanov
- Labor utopias in literature, for instance those of Le Guin and Callenbach
- Labor utopias in Anarchist thought
- Marx's vision of unalienated labor and communism

- We will also accept a limited number of proposals on the final, meta-theoretical panel topic: ought we revisit these utopian and revolutionary proposals from history for thinking about labor justice today, and what can we learn from them.

This event is part of the Ammodo project [“The political philosophy of work - expanding our vision”](#) and is organized by Lisa M. Herzog (l.m.herzog@rug.nl) and Tyler C. Re (t.c.re@rug.nl) at the University of Groningen, Philosophy Faculty.