

Southern African Historical Society

Currently hosted by the Department of History, University of Johannesburg, PO Box 524, Auckland Park, 2006, ZA | Tel: +27 (0) 11 559 2001

29th BIENNIAL SOUTHERN AFRICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY CONFERENCE 26 - 28 JUNE 2024

Hosted by the Department of History, University of Johannesburg



The SAHS invites proposals for its 29th Biennial conference, 26-28 June 2024, to be held at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa, around the broad theme of 'History at the Precipice: Continuity, Change and Crises in Southern Africa'.

This is an in-person conference!

There are strong grounds for arguing that Southern Africa and the world find themselves in what historian, Professor Adam Tooze, has called a 'polycrisis': a wide-ranging set of interlocking economic, political, social and environmental crises, which are currently manifesting themselves in alarming fashion, and which have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and geopolitical shocks such as the war in Ukraine. History and the skills, and methods of historians provide invaluable tools for understanding the past in general, as it relates to the present. Historians seek to identify patterns: mapping continuity, change and crises onto the past. The evaluation of crises and debates about their existence or otherwise, their origins and extent, are at the very heart of the practice of history, and claims about crises, their causes, severity and resolution are central to the realm of politics, more broadly.

Historical research at its best can provide a sense of perspective on the import, duration and seriousness of perceived crises. Southern Africa is self-evidently being impacted by the global 'polycrisis' which Tooze identifies, but the challenge is to delineate and debate the specific form(s) of the crises finding expression in the region – in the continent – at present, their origins, their contingent nature and their severity. It might be argued that the history of southern Africa as a whole has been marked, over the centuries, by successive crises of various sorts, from the precolonial era, through to the present. Processes of state formation, migration, colonialism, resistance, economic, social and environmental change have produced numerous perceived and real crises that have had major political ramifications, principally across the region but also into Southern Africa and its soil-rooted and oceanic hinterlands, into Africa and out into the world beyond. Contemporary concerns across southern Africa include the social and economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, deepening inequality, the land question, the effects of climate change and energy transitions, contestations over migration, ethnicity and xenophobia, and crises of infrastructure and government more broadly.

The SAHS invites proposals for papers, panels or roundtable discussions that speak in some way to the broad themes of change, continuity and crises in southern Africa and beyond. We especially invite submissions that reflect upon the stakes of claims about the existence or otherwise of crises, including the opportunities and perils entailed in writing 'at the precipice' of perceived crises. What political work have claims to crises done in Southern African history, and what do they do in the present? How do these claims manifest beyond the region? If resistance has been a major theme in southern African historiographies of colonialism and decolonisation, what use might the often-problematic notion of 'resilience' have for understanding the region's histories and crises?

The SAHS strives to reflect the broad diversity of history as a discipline in southern Africa its connection to the broader African region. it is therefore open to a wide range of themes, including – but not limited to:

- 'Development' and states in crisis
- Southern Africa as a historical unit of analysis
- Regional histories of migration & xenophobia

- Archives and heritage in crisis
- Histories of Consumption & indebtedness
- Environment, energy and infrastructure
- Histories of inequality, unemployment & welfare
- Histories of corruption
- Gender, Sexualities and Crisis
- Health and Healing in Crisis
- Histories of local government
- Historiography, teaching and historical pedagogy
- Liberation histories and crisis

Paper submissions should include an abstract (max 200 words) and a biographical statement (a brief paragraph of 100 words). Panel and roundtable submissions should include a minimum of three papers (each with a 200-word abstract and short biographical statement), a proposed moderator/chair (if possible), and a 100-word abstract.

All submissions must be done via the SAHS website, www.sahs.org.za. The closing date for submissions is the end of February 2024. You may also apply for membership and pay for the conference via the website. In a bid to assist our members, conference fees have not changed since 2022.

Conference registration commences on 1 March 2024.

Early-bird registration ends on 12 April 2024

Early-bird registration fee for SAHS members only: R2500

Regular fee after 12 April 2024: R2900

Postdoctoral fellows: R2400

Postgraduate students: R1900 - There will also be a limited number of post-graduate

bursaries to assist with registration fees.

Further details regarding student subsidies, conference logistics, and the SAHS Vice-Presidential Graduate Student prize will be published on the SAHS conference website in due course. For more information, please email Tshepo Moloi: moloit@uj.ac.za or Annie Devenish at annie.devenish@wits.ac.za.

Current members and prospective members can contact the SAHS Treasurer Natasha Erlank on matters regarding new member applications, renewals or registration fees at nerlank@uj.ac.za.

There will be a special conference edition of *the South African Historical Journal*, but in addition, we welcome suggestions (via panels) for special features – clusters of 3-4 papers. If you would like to follow this route, please indicate so when submitting your panel to the conference.

^{*}The Southern African Historical Society is committed to fostering the development of young scholars in History and its allied disciplines.*