

The Board of the Roman Epistulae Project (Serena Connolly of Rutgers University-New Brunswick, Elsemieke Daalder of the University of Münster, Zachary Herz of the University of Colorado-Boulder, and Matthijs Wibier of the University of Cincinnati) invites submitted abstracts for a conference entitled “*Empire of Correspondence: Roman Imperial Letters as Literature and State Messaging, 31 B.C.E.–534 C.E.*” to be held in Boulder, CO on October 4–5 2024.

Conference Description:

Roman emperors used correspondence not only to administer one of the largest territorial empires in the history of the world, but also to generate a widely-distributed and -consumed chronicle of their affect and moral reasoning. At the same time, recipients deployed these letters as trump cards in smaller-scale local conflicts, building blocks of a nascent system of positive law, and relics commemorating brushes with a god. These letters performed several different roles simultaneously within Roman social and political life, but contemporary scholarship has generally considered them narrowly, as part of the histories of specific political and social institutions like ‘Roman law.’ *Empire of Correspondence* seeks to bring together humanists from different regions and disciplines to think about the role of imperial correspondence in constituting Roman society, and accordingly in developing ideas of sovereignty and fairness that would animate centuries of European political thought.

Accordingly, we welcome submissions on the roles played by imperial correspondence in social and political life during the Roman imperial period, including but not limited to the following sorts of research questions:

-How did imperial replies function in the context of smaller-scale local disputes, and how does this reception process change over time and place?

-What made imperial correspondence so meaningful to its recipients, and what did this correspondence do to inform popular conceptions of a responsive or engaged imperial presence?

-Do changes in the infrastructure governing the production and dissemination of imperial letters affect their social afterlives?

Thanks to the generous support of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), funding is available for speaker travel and accommodation; we anticipate publishing conference proceedings. Keynote addresses will be delivered by Clifford Ando of the University of Chicago (title TBD) and by Serena Connolly (“Fergus Millar’s ‘Treasure House’”). Interested presenters should e-mail a *curriculum vitae* and an abstract of no more than 500 words to empireofcorrespondence@gmail.com by January 1, 2024. All inquiries may be addressed to Zachary Herz, at the above address or at zachary.herz@colorado.edu. Please feel free to forward widely; we welcome submissions from graduate students and early-career researchers, and from a variety of disciplinary homes. Thank you for your consideration,

Zach
Serena
Elsemieke
Matthijs