



CONFERENCE

A Social Question before the Social Question

Addressing Poverty in Enlightenment Europe

22-23 October 2026

Somerville College, Oxford
Margaret Thatcher Centre

THURSDAY 22 OCTOBER

13:30 Welcome

13:45 **Introduction**

Damiano Bardelli and Matilde Cazzola

Session 1 Rural Poverty

14:00 **The Invention of Rural Poverty in England, from 1760**

Joanna Innes (University of Oxford)

14:30 **'*Combien de pauvres elle sauveroit de l'indigence?*': Small-Scale Agriculture as an Antidote to Rural Poverty in Late Eighteenth-Century France**

Aris Della Fontana (Università della Svizzera italiana)

15:00 Refreshments

Session 2 Poverty and Society

15:20 ***Laissez Faire, Laissez Manger*: The Economics of Boisguilbert's Antipoverty**

Nicholas O'Neill (Arizona State University)

15:50 **Accidental Poverty and Merit**

Masano Yamashita (University of Colorado Boulder)

16:20 **Population, Luxury and Poverty: The Political Economy of James Steuart**

Jacopo Bonasera (Gerda Henkel Stiftung)

16:50 **Making the Poor 'Useful' in Late Eighteenth-Century Cracow**

Marek Maj (European University Institute)

FRIDAY 23 OCTOBER

Session 3 In the Parish

9:00 **Poor and Power in the Parish: Bargaining for a Collective Poor Relief Strategy during the 1771 Famine**

Gabi Wüthrich (Universität Zürich)

9:30 **Between Intentions and Practice: Dealing with Poverty in a Rural Lithuanian Parish**

Rūta Miškinytė (Vilnius University)

10:00 **Memories of the Medieval Church: Critiques of Parish Poor Relief and Tithe Reform in Early-Nineteenth-Century England**

Ellen Gallimore (University of York)

10:30 Refreshments

Session 4 Between Assistance and Confinement

- 11:00 **'Since it is the Spirit of the Present Government to Favour Hospitals and Workhouses': Conflicts over Poor Relief in Eighteenth-Century Spain**
Julie Marfany (Durham University)
- 11:30 **Materiality and the Confinement of the Poor in Eighteenth-Century Switzerland**
Nathalie Dahn-Singh (Université de Lausanne)
- 12:00 **A Social Problem and a Financial Conundrum: Funding the Care of Foundlings in Eighteenth-Century France**
Adrien Schwartz (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne)
- 12:30 Lunch

Session 5 Reforming Poor Relief

- 13:30 **Agreements and Disagreements among Reformist Elites in Addressing Poverty: The 1777 Châlons Competition on 'How to Eradicate Begging by Making Beggars Useful to the State without Making them Unhappy'**
Laurence Fontaine (EHESS)
- 14:00 **Reforming Poor Relief in Eighteenth-Century Genoa: Ideas, Practices and Female Benefaction**
Francesca Ferrando (Università di Verona)
- 14:30 **Work and Education: Reforming Poor Relief in Late Eighteenth-Century Switzerland**
Damiano Bardelli (University of Oxford)
- 15:00 **Claiming Philanthropy from Below: British Radicalism and the Ragged-Trousered Lovers of Mankind**
Matilde Cazzola (Università di Bologna)
- 15:30 Refreshments
- 16:00 Concluding discussion

Organisation

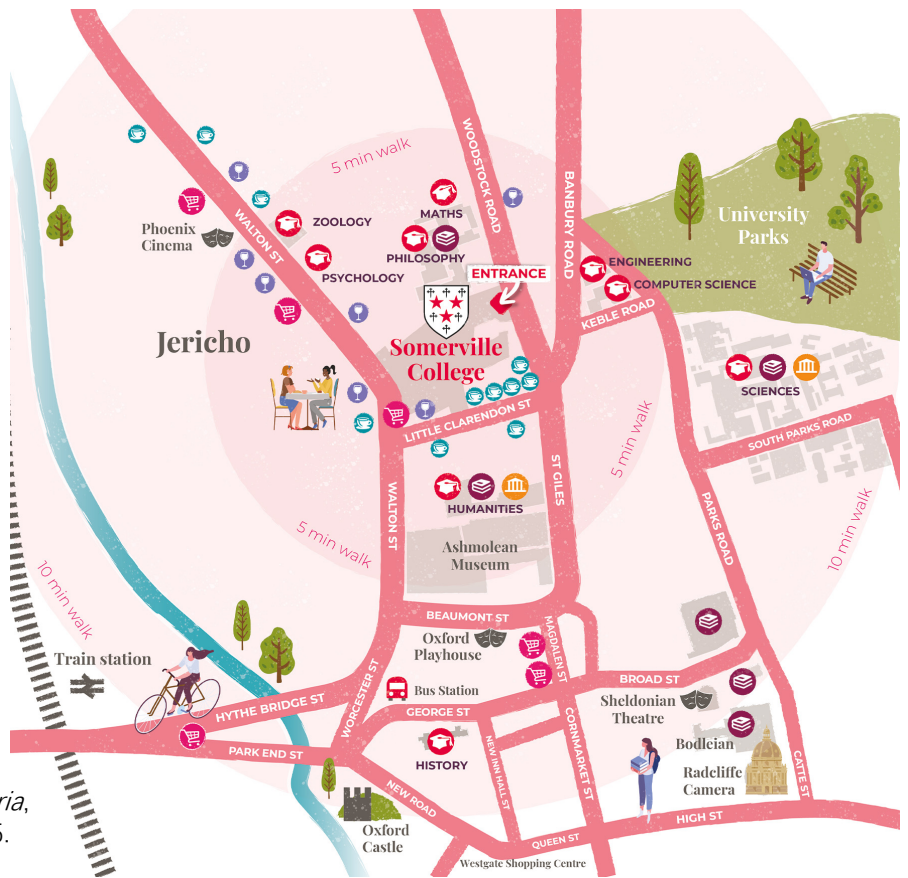
Damiano Bardelli (Voltaire Foundation, University of Oxford)
Matilde Cazzola (DiSCi, Università di Bologna, and mpilhl)
with Joanna Innes (Faculty of History, University of Oxford)

With the support of

Swiss National Science Foundation | Max Planck Institute | Voltaire Foundation

Contacts

damiano.bardelli@voltaire.ox.ac.uk | matilde.cazzola2@unibo.it



Cover credits

Francisco Goya, *Alegoría de la Industria*,
tempera on canvas, ø 227 cm, c. 1805.

© Museo del Prado, Madrid.

