

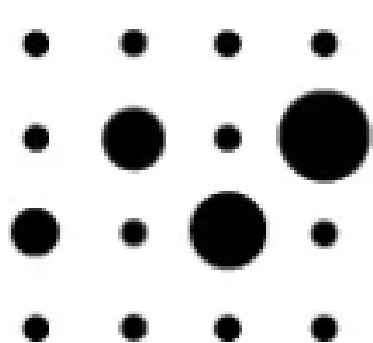
INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP



Namelessness in History: Methodological Challenges and Transdisciplinary Perspectives

17–18 September 2026

Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies,
Conference Room, Niebuhrstr. 5, 53113 Bonn



Volkswagen**Stiftung**



About the Workshop

This workshop investigates analogue and digital methods for the analysis of namelessness in historical sources. It is part of the project “The Nameless in History”, funded by the Volkswagenstiftung’s ‘Open Up –New Research Spaces for the Humanities and Cultural Studies’. This funding initiative supports researchers in the humanities and cultural studies to ‘open up’ new areas of research and knowledge by jointly exploring complex and previously unexplored topics.

“The Nameless in History” takes as its starting point the fact that most individuals mentioned in sources of the past are nameless, with those belonging to minoritized groups even less likely to be identified by name. Yet, despite the prevalence of nameless individuals in the historical record, there are serious challenges for studying them and they are therefore rarely collected or analysed systematically. At this workshop, we bring together scholars from a variety of Humanities fields, from Classics and medieval history to American and cultural studies, archival studies and the Digital Humanities.

The workshop’s guiding questions are: What tools do we need to investigate namelessness in historical sources? How can we use the data we collect about nameless people to produce new knowledge about past societies? How can we write histories of nameless people? How are nameless people of the past remembered in present societies?

Our aim is to test the usefulness and cross-applicability of approaches developed in specific disciplines in different contexts, including in the Digital Humanities and AI research, and to explore new, multidisciplinary methods. Our discussion will ultimately support the compilation of a toolkit for the study of namelessness for researchers in the Humanities.

Programme

Day 1, Thursday 17 September

BCDSS, Conference Room, Niebuhrstr. 5, 53113 Bonn

9.00–9.30 Welcome: Introduction to the project “The Nameless in History” (Julia Hillner, Pia Wiegink, Jamie Wood), and getting to know each other

Session 1: Getting Started

9.30–10.15 Discussion of preparatory reading (all)

Walter Hawthorne et al., “Introduction: The Politics and Ethics of Naming the Names of Enslaved People in Digital Humanities Projects”, Digital Humanities Quarterly 19 (2025) (<https://dhq-static.digitalhumanities.org/pdf/000781.pdf>)

10.15–10.30 Coffee break

Session 2: Antiquity

10.30–11.30 Alessandra Tafaro, Genre, Gender, and Anonymous Epigraphic Writing: Recovering Female Voices

11.30–12.00 Julia Hillner, Cataloguing Nameless People in Late Antique Narrative Sources

12.00–12.30 Jamie Wood, Extrapolating the Nameless: Problems and Possibilities

12.30–2.00 Lunch in a nearby canteen

Session 3: Modernity

14.00–15.00 Temi Odumosu, What Must be Named? Reflections on Description as Testimony

15.00–15.30 Pia Wiegink, Remembering the Unknown Dead

15.30–16.00 Amalia Levi, Provenance and the Creator: From Nameless Individuals to Community of Voices

18.00 Dinner at Aleppo Rose

Programme

Day 2, Friday 18 September

BCDSS, Conference Room, Niebuhrstr. 5, 53113 Bonn

9.00–9.30 Discussion/reflection Session 1–3

Session 4: The Nameless and the Digital Humanities

9.30–10.00 Claes Neuefeind & Jonathan Blumtritt, Many to Many – Models and Paradigms in Digital Prosopography

10.00–10.30 Christoph Rippe, Acknowledging Individuals: Opportunities and Challenges with Using AI Tools to Identify People in Photographs from Colonial Contexts

10.30–11.00 Alexander Ermakov, Namelessness between Source Discovery and Epistemic Drift: AI, Large and Small Text Corpora, and the Transformation of Scholarly Practice

11.00–11.30 Coffee break

Session 5: Wrap-up

11.30–13.00 Final discussion

13.00 Lunch at Schumanns

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Our Project Website:

<https://www.dependency.uni-bonn.de/en/research/affiliated-research-projects/the-nameless-in-history>