

You are cordially invited to the
2016 NATALIE ZEMON DAVIS ANNUAL LECTURES

JAMES S. AMELANG

Universidad Autónoma de Madrid

James S. Amelang studied History and Romance Languages at Oberlin College (BA '74), International Relations at Johns Hopkins-SAIS (MA '76), and History at Princeton University (Ph.D '82). Studies in Madrid and Bologna, and a doctoral research in Barcelona laid the foundations of his interest in early modern European history, and after teaching at the University of Florida he settled in Madrid, where he has taught at the Universidad Autónoma since 1989. His principal books are *Honored Citizens of Barcelona: Patrician Culture and Class Relations, 1490-1714* (1986); *A Journal of the Plague Year: The Diary of the Barcelona Tanner Miquel Parets, 1651* (1991); *The Flight of Icarus: Artisan Autobiography in Early Modern Europe* (1998); and *Parallel Histories: Jews and Muslims in Inquisitorial Spain* (2013). He also co-authored (with Gary McDonogh and Xavier Gil) *Twelve Walks through Barcelona's Past* (1992). His current project is to complete the *Oxford History of Early Modern Spain*.

WRITING CITIES: EXPLORING EARLY MODERN URBAN DISCOURSE



Only one out of every ten early modern Europeans lived in cities. Yet cities were crucial nodes, joining together producers and consumers, rulers and ruled, and believers in diverse faiths and futures. They also generated an enormous amount of writing, much of which focused on civic life itself. Yet despite its obvious importance, historians have paid surprisingly little attention to urban discourse; its forms, themes, emphases and silences all invite further study. These lectures explore various dimensions of how and what early modern citizens wrote

about their cities, and offer practical suggestions regarding the different ways historians can approach such a diverse and intriguing textual corpus. At the same time they highlight the extraordinary contribution Natalie Davis has made to our understanding of early modern urban society and culture.

**AUTHORS:
CREATING
A CORPUS**

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 6

5.30 pm

Nador 15 Auditorium

**FACADES:
DEFINING URBAN
BEAUTY**

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7

5.30 pm

Nador 15 Auditorium

**DIALOGUES:
THE TALK
OF THE TOWN**

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9

5.30 pm

Nador 15 Auditorium



5.30 PM ON DECEMBER 6, 2016

AUTHORS: CREATING A CORPUS



Who wrote about early modern cities, and which forms did city men and women adopt and adapt when doing so? This lecture opens by surveying the range, genres, and themes of urban discourse produced within a single city, Barcelona. Focusing on the social background of their authors reveals that most of them hailed from the civic elite; however, a significant part of this discourse originated among merchants and even artisans. It then examines civic texts containing or organized around two specific motifs — the presentation of a city by taking a walk through it, or by climbing a tower to see it — in order to get a broader view of what sorts of citizens chose to write about cities. Finally, the lecture closes with a few observations about how this discourse — and its authors — changed over time.

5.30 PM ON DECEMBER 7, 2016

FACADES: DEFINING URBAN BEAUTY

Perhaps the most common adjective used to characterize early modern cities was "beautiful" — at least when the author was a local citizen. Out-of-towners, however, often had different opinions. This highly visible fissure between insiders and outsiders disguises what little effort either set of urban discourses made to define what was meant by civic beauty. Reading between the lines of their texts, however, brings to the surface many of the criteria used to judge the appearance of cities. Especially telling is the missed connection between Renaissance architectural theory and how much of the rest of society defined beauty. The lecture ends by suggesting that discourse regarding one city in particular — Venice — helped to narrow this gap, and in so doing contributed to the general transition toward a post-classical aesthetic that marked the later eighteenth century.



5.30 PM ON DECEMBER 9, 2016

DIALOGUES: THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Does form really follow function? One particular genre of urban discourse, the dialogue, suggests that the opposite may be the case. The striking popularity of written conversations in or about early modern cities owed a great deal to the specific characteristics of the genre. Most obvious among these were its open, easy-going format, and its ability simultaneously to accommodate different points of view (while making it possible to favor certain ones in particular). But one of the most prominent attractions of such colloquies was their ability to reproduce in writing one of the things city people liked most to do: to talk. This final lecture surveys the rich but little probed textual world of urban dialogues, and focuses in particular on the extent to which historians may turn to them as sources for reconstructing actual speech from a world we find easier to read than to listen to.