

SERVING AT THE PALACE: FROM THE THRONE TO THE KITCHEN IN EARLY MODERN COURTS

31 aug | 4 sep '26



SERVING AT THE PALACE: FROM THE THRONE TO THE KITCHEN IN EARLY MODERN COURTS

The 2026 Sintra Summer School explores the political, social, and moral dimensions of service in early modern courts. Far from being limited to domestic tasks, service structured hierarchies, careers, and everyday life at court, connecting the king, courtiers, and servants in networks of obligation, loyalty, and prestige.

Participants will discover how princely households functioned as complex, hierarchical communities, where domestic duties, ceremonial roles, and administrative responsibilities intertwined, and how the governance of the palace reflected the governance of the realm.

This year's Summer School brings together experts who have made groundbreaking contributions to the history of service in early modern Europe, from noble and chivalric service to domestic labour. Key sessions will explore service as a political bond, the organisation of court households and the management of royal sites, the social conditions of the palace workforce, the forms of bodily care, and entertainment as a distinct mode of service.

To emphasise the importance of spatial context in shaping service relations, discussions will take place in the medieval-to-early-modern National Palace of Sintra and the rococo National Palace of Queluz. Guided visits and excursions to the Ducal Palace of Vila Viçosa and the National Palace of Pena will provide hands-on encounters with kitchens, chambers, chapels, and ceremonial spaces where these social interactions unfolded. Workshops and demonstrations, covering the economy of favour and historical sports, offer experiential insights into service as both practice and performance.

Through a combination of expert-led discussions and immersive site visits, participants will engage with the careers, duties, and lived experiences of early modern servants, officials, and courtiers. This programme offers a unique opportunity to understand service not merely as a daily practice but as a foundational element of early modern political and social order.

Join us!

AUDIENCE

This course is intended for:

- Undergraduate, graduate and doctoral students of history, art history, museology and heritage;
- heritage and museum professionals;
- general public with a specific interest in the topic.



31 August | National Palace of Sintra

09:15 Reception and registration (main entrance)

09:30 Welcome Session

ANTÓNIO NUNES PEREIRA (Parques de Sintra)

BERNARDO GARCIA GARCIA (Univ. Complutense Madrid)

BRUNO A MARTINHO (Parques de Sintra; CHAM)

09:45 Session 1: Governing and Rising through Service

PEDRO CARDIM (Univ. NOVA Lisboa)

Courtly and Military Service in Habsburg Portugal:

Noble Self-Fashioning in the Castelo Branco Chronicle (c.1590)

DRIES RAEYMAEKERS (Radboud Universiteit)

Service, Skill, and Status: Building a Career in the Princely Household

11:15 Coffee break

11:45 Workshop 1:

Service, Grace, and the Economy of Favour

JOSÉ MIGUEL ESCRIBANO (Univ. Pablo de Olavide)

PABLO HERNÁNDEZ SAU (Univ. Pablo de Olavide)

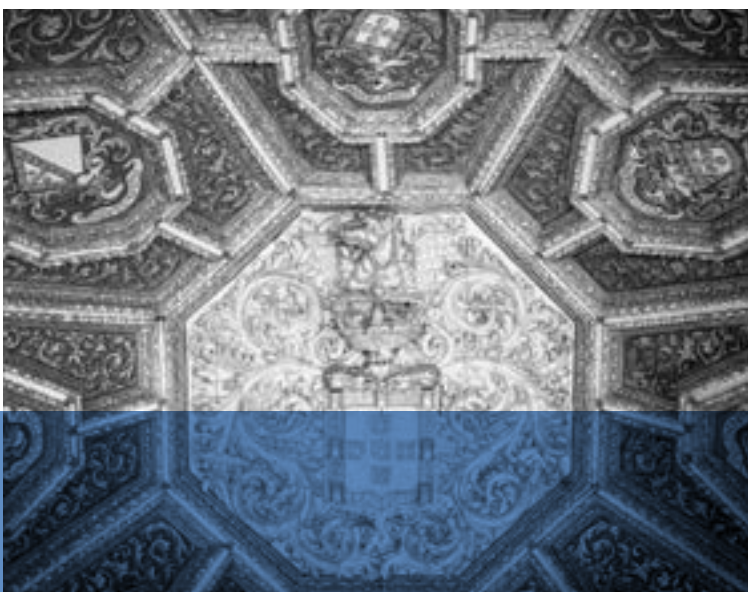
13:30 Lunch (not included)

15:00 PhD Presentations

16:00 Visit to the National Palace of Sintra

19:00 Cocktail dînatoire

20:30 End of Day 1



1 september | National Palace of Sintra

09:15 Reception (main entrance)

09:30 Session 2: The Court Workforce I

RAFFAELLA SARTI (Univ. Urbino Carlo Bo)

Serving the prince, serving the poor in early modern Europe and beyond (online)

MARIA ÅGREN (Uppsala Univ.)

To study servant work with the verb-oriented method: Some insights from the Gender and Work project

11:15 Coffee break

11:45 Session 3: The Court Workforce II

CRISTINA HERNÁNDEZ CASADO (Univ. Complutense Madrid)

More Than Enslaved People: Black Communities in the Iberian Peninsula and Their Presence at Court (16th-17th Centuries)

FRANCISCO J. MORENO DÍAZ DEL CAMPO (Univ. Castilla La Mancha)

Entre Viejas e Veludos: Mouros e Mouriscos nos Ambientes Cortesãos da Monarquia Hispânica | From Alleys to Velvet: Moors and Moriscos in the Courtly Spaces of the Hispanic Monarchy (in Spanish, with written translation in English)

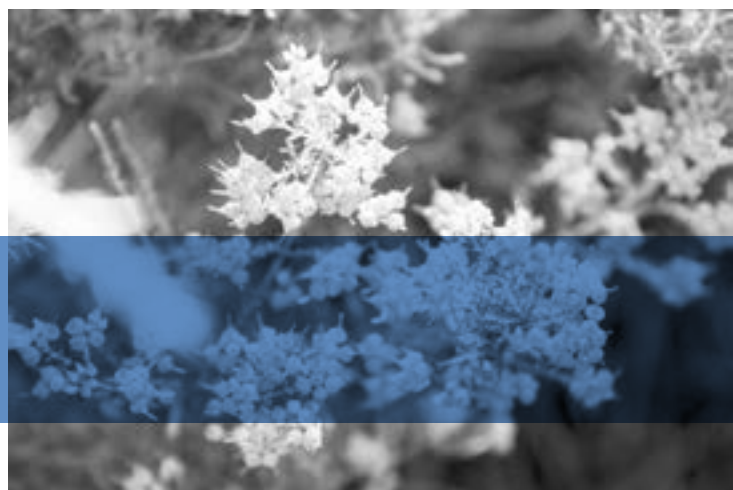
13:00 Lunch (not included)

14:30 Workshop 2: Historical Fencing

EmCadeamentos – Associação para a Promoção do Património Histórico e Cultural

18:00 End of Day 2





2 september | Ducal Palace of Vila Viçosa

- 08:00** Bus departure from Sintra
- 10:15** Arrival in Vila Viçosa
- 10:30** Session 4: Service at a ducal court
MAFALDA SOARES DA CUNHA (Univ. Évora)
Serving the Dukes of Bragança at Court and in Manorial Administration, 16th-17th centuries
- 11:30** Visit to the Castle of Vila Viçosa
- 12:30** Lunch
- 14:30** Visit to the Ducal Palace of Vila Viçosa
NUNO SENOS (Univ. NOVA de Lisboa)
- 18:00** Bus departure from Vila Viçosa
- 20:30** Arrival in Sintra and end of Day 3



3 september | National Palace and Gardens of Queluz

09:45 Bus departure to Queluz

10:30 Session 5: Body care as service

CECILIA NOCILLI (Univ. Granada)

Dance as courtly labor: Embodied practice and musical thought in Domenico da Piacenza (1410 ca. – 1477 ca.)

EMMA GRIFFIN (Queen Mary Univ. London)

Hunting, sport, and pastimes in the early modern court

12:00 Apéritif

12:30 Session 6: Entertainment as service

JANET RAVENSCROFT (Ind. Scholar)

Companions to royalty or figures of fun? Examining the complex role of court entertainers

MARIA LUISA LOBATO (Univ. Burgos)

Comediantes al servicio de la corte de los Austrias | Court Performers in the Service of the Spanish Habsburgs
(in Spanish, with written translation in English)

14:00 Lunch (not included)

15:30 Visit to the National Palace of Queluz

18:30 End of Day 4



4 september | National Palace of Sintra National Palace of Pena

09:30 Reception

10:00 Session 7: Managing Royal Sites

MATHIEU DA VINHA (Centre de recherche du château de Versailles)

The functioning of the Palace of Versailles in the 17th century

JOSÉ ELOY HORTAL MUÑOZ (Univ. Rey Juan Carlos)

The Managing of the System of Royal Geographies of the Habsburg Spanish Monarchy (XVI-XVIIth centuries): from the Iberian Peninsula to America

11:30 Closing Session: Managing Royal Sites in the 21st Century

JOÃO SOUSA REGO (Parques de Sintra)

12:15 Lunch with Wrap-up Session

BERNARDO GARCÍA GARCÍA (Universidad Complutense de Madrid)

BRUNO A MARTINHO (Parques de Sintra; CHAM)

14:00 Bus departure to the National Palace of Pena

15:30 Visit to the National Palace of Pena

18:00 Bus departure to Sintra and end of Day 5



DATES

31 August to 4 September 2026

PARTICIPATION COSTS

- Registration fee – students
100 €
- Registration fee - general public
200 €
- Accommodation (6 nights at the youth hostel)
180 €

ACCOMMODATION DETAILS

- Youth hostel accommodation
Pousada de Jovens - Sintra
- 6 nights in a four-bed mixed dorm
- Subject to availability at the time of booking

MEALS

- Meals included in the registration fee: 1 cocktail, 2 coffee breaks, 1 aperitif, 2 lunches.
- The remaining meals are at the expense of the participant.

MAXIMUM NUMBER OF REGISTRATIONS

30 (thirty)

DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING APPLICATIONS

31 May 2026

Announcement of the selected participants during the month of June.

CREDITS

There are no credits, but a certificate is issued.

ORGANISATION

Parques de Sintra – Monte da Lua, SA

Universidad Complutense de Madrid

Fundación Carlos de Amberes

CHAM – Centro de Humanidades, FCSH/Nova, UAç*

Universidad de Burgos

Universidad Castilla-La Mancha

Fundação Casa de Bragança

ASSOCIATED RESEARCH PROJECTS

POLEMHIS 2. Espacios mediáticos, mercado de la opinión y formas de negociación en los conflictos de la Monarquía Hispánica (1559-1725) (PID2024-156705NB-I00) financiado por la Agencia Estatal de Investigación – Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades (MICIU/AEI/10.13039/501100011033) y FEDER/UE – Universidad Complutense de Madrid

PROTEO – Power and festive performances (1450-1750),
Universidad de Burgos

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