



ESTER
European Graduate
School for Training in
Economic and Social
Historical Research



Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen

Call for Applications

ESTER Research Design Course

How to strengthen your dissertation project?

The European graduate School for Training in Economic and Social Historical Research (ESTER) is a European platform for postgraduate teaching. ESTER announces its annual Research Design Course (RDC) for economic and social historians on

6 – 8 November, Cracow (Poland)

The **ESTER** network, established in 1991, involves more than 60 universities throughout Europe and offers high-level research training for PhD students in an international context. At present the network is organized by the N.W. Posthumus Institute, which is a graduate school for economic and social history in the Netherlands and Flanders. The Research Design Course of 2017 will be organized by Bartosz Ogórek (Pedagogical University of Cracow) and Mikołaj Malinowski (Lund University/WEast network).

The Research Design Course (RDC) is a format promoted by ESTER since the late 1990s. The RDC assists students in setting up a high quality and well-designed plan for their dissertation under the guidance of a team of leading senior researchers whose task it is to provide comments and lead discussions.

With the help of guidelines, PhD students are asked to write a paper in which they think through issues of methodology and research design of social and historical research, the use of concepts and language in historical explanation, the construction of data bases and the use of quantitative methods of analysis, or the construction of the "plot" in a historical

inquiry. The aim of this type of reflection on theory and methodology is to investigate the scientific procedures that historians use to reach scientific explanations and to combine all analytical elements into a synthetic and coherent historical account. In this paper the PhD students also prepare a detailed work plan for the dissertation. The paper has a length of around 25 pages and should provide the structure in which the remaining research for the dissertation will take place. Subsequently, the PhD student will give a brief presentation during the conference, act as chair and peer commentator for other papers, and will receive feedback from junior and senior scholars in the field.

In this way, the RDC course offers students help in sharpening and refining their research questions, in strengthening the focus of their research, in increasing the consistency of their overall dissertation plan, in making explicit the various theoretical and methodological choices that have to be made in the course of the project, and in improving the composition of the dissertation. The RDC course thereby aims at a better awareness of research choices that need to be made.

Description and organization of the RDC

The RDC consists of a 3 day workshop. Prior to the workshop students will prepare a paper (of around 25 pages) according to a set of guidelines. During the workshop, each paper will be examined in separate 70 minute sessions. Each session will begin with comments prepared by one of the participating PhD students, followed by comments by one of the senior commentators, after which a general discussion among all participants will take place.

All papers must be circulated in advance; students need to read and prepare *all* papers to be discussed in their group. This year a maximum number of 40 students can be admitted; work will take place in three or four groups of students. A certificate will be awarded to participants who have successfully completed the course.

Requirements

The RDC program is intended for PhD students in economic and social history regardless of the subject of their dissertation. Students need to be at the very least in the end of their first year of PhD-research at the time of the course, and before the moment when the

methodology of a study and the research design are fully crystallised. For a fruitful participation it is absolutely vital that students have actually been working on their own research for at least 6 months by the time they begin writing their paper so that they are able to put together a first extensive design of their research plans (aims, objectives, sources and methods). The working language for papers, presentations and discussion is English. Participants of the course should be aware of the fact that sufficient command of English is a necessity for a useful and satisfying participation.

Applications and admission

Students should [apply online](#) and submit an 800 word abstract of the content of their dissertation project. A first selection of students will take place on the basis of the abstract. After this stage, students who are accepted will be asked to follow a set of guidelines in order to write their research paper. The final admission to the course depends upon the following points:

- the students must meet the deadline for submission of his/her paper;
- the quality of the paper: the papers must be of sufficient academic quality, and the level of the English used in the paper must be sufficient.

Dates and location

The 2017 RDC will take place at the Pedagogical University of Cracow. The course will start with an informal welcome session on Sunday 5 November around 5 pm. The course will end on Wednesday 8 November with a closing session and drinks around 4 pm. Students wishing to participate are requested to send in their application no later than 19 May 2017. For this purpose it is necessary to use the online form. The selection of students will be completed before the beginning of June. Deadline for submission of papers by accepted students is 15 September 2016. Following that date, the papers will be made available to all participants on the [ESTER-website](#).

Time path

30 March	Call for Applications
19 May	Deadline application
2 June	Selection completed, applicants informed
15 September	Deadline paper submission
6 October	Papers online for reading
6-8 November	RDC Cracow

Costs

There are no registration costs and accommodation (three nights; 5-7 November 2017) and catering will be covered by the organizers. The PhD student's home institution should cover travel costs. Travel arrangements to and from Cracow have to be organized by the selected participants themselves.

Subsidies

Students who do not have travel budget or for whom financing would be an obstacle to participation may be eligible for a travel subsidy. This is especially intended to encourage participation of students from Eastern Europe. Please indicate this wish in your application.

Contact

For inquiries concerning this course, please contact the education programme director of ESTER: Bram Hoonhout (b.hoonhout@let.ru.nl)