

**Call for Papers**  
*Otherness in Byzantium:  
Imagining, Encountering, Excluding*  
**Vienna, May 22-23, 2026**

**CEU-UniWien Late Antique and Byzantine Studies Student Colloquium**

**May 22:**

Central European University, Quellenstrasse 51, D001, 1100 Vienna.

**May 23:**

Department of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, University of Vienna, Postgasse 9, Lecture Hall, 1010 Vienna.

How the Other is constructed has been extensively explored within post-structuralism and deconstructive theory, starting with the seminal works of Derrida and Foucault. These ideas have intersected with and influenced various fields in the humanities and social sciences, including post-colonial theory and gender studies, which have dealt with the construction of racialized and gendered bodies through the opposition between normative selves and stigmatized or otherized identities. Within Byzantine studies, the exploration of otherness has opened new avenues for understanding how parts of Byzantine society defined themselves in relation to external groups as well as internal others, such as heretics, non-Christians, and marginalized communities.

In this conference, we wish to approach the concept of otherness from two complementary perspectives. On the one hand, we intend to investigate how the Byzantines imagined an idealized self-identity, in a dialectic way, through the construction of the Other. This includes exploring the strategies used by social groups to construct a self-perception distinct from outsiders. On the other hand, we aim to address the issue of deconstructing our own gaze as scholars dealing with regions and peoples that have been historically otherized.

We welcome papers from all disciplines in Byzantine studies and adjacent fields, dealing with textual, visual, and material sources. The papers should address the representation and discursive construction of the Other in and of Byzantium and examine the relationship between outsider and insider as a spectrum of interactions instead of a dichotomy. Research questions could include: What words were used by the Byzantines to define the Other (such as ἑτερότης, “difference,” and ἄλλότης, “otherness”)? What were the points of convergence and divergence between rhetoric or theory and daily life? Were there degrees of otherness and what were the mechanisms and exceptions of inclusion and exclusion? To what degree, if at all, did otherized identities intersect?

Possible topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Gender, sexuality, and corporeality: traditional and non-normative masculinities and femininities; diverse discourses on sexuality and the human body.
- Ethnic identities: religious, linguistic, ethnic, and racial hybridity.
- Class-based social groups: the plurality of social hierarchies from peasants to emperors.
- Orthodoxy and heresy: shifting and contesting definitions of the “correct” belief and Christian identity.
- Spatial identity: local identities from center to periphery, mainland to island, city to desert and countryside, within and beyond Byzantium.
- Decolonizing the gaze: papers that engage with (de)constructing the Byzantine otherness in modern (western) scholarly discourses, or with the relation of Byzantine studies to the present of the regions they study, their people, the forms of knowledge produced there.

Keynote Speakers: Prof. Koray Durak (Boğaziçi University), Prof. Ingela Nilsson (Uppsala University).

We invite applications from graduate students at MA and PhD level. Those wishing to have their 20-minute paper considered should send an email to [Kok\\_Ad@phd.ceu.edu](mailto:Kok_Ad@phd.ceu.edu), and [marieke.verbiest@univie.ac.at](mailto:marieke.verbiest@univie.ac.at) with a paper title, a 200-word abstract, and an academic affiliation by February 20, 2026. Applicants will be notified by March 2. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us!

Organizers: Ada Kök, Alessandra Guido, Dachi Pachulia, Gunhyuk Lee, Hans-Nikos Christoforakis, Kassandra Cox, Luidmila Eramova, Marieke Verbiest, Olga Vlachou, Panagiotis Kouloukis.