

THE MEDIEVAL HISTORY WORKSHOP (SPRING 2026) PRESENTS
a talk by

Giorgio Lizzul

University of Vienna, Harvard University

MEASURING INEQUALITY IN FIFTEENTH-CENTURY VENICE: New Evidence from Venetian Chronicles

This paper examines a hitherto unstudied Venetian chronicle which uniquely reproduces fiscal data from a mid-15th-century Venetian *Estimo*, a state financial register listing over 2,000 citizen creditors. The discovery is an invaluable new testimony for both the fiscal and wider social history of Venice, given the destruction of the fiscal ledgers of Venice in the devastating Rialto fire of 1514. In *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, Jacob Burckhardt argued that one hallmark of Renaissance intellectual culture was an impulse to quantify and measure – a numeric current running concurrently, and at times in tandem with humanist classicism – seen, he claimed, in Venetian political and historical writing. This paper investigates how practical fiscal knowledge and quantitative data were preserved and mobilized in 15th-century Venice through historical writing, and why chroniclers reproduced large sets of numerical data. It demonstrates how such quantitative information functioned both as a tool of governance and a narrative device, shaping the political culture of the patriciate.



Giorgio Lizzul is an intellectual and economic historian of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance, specializing in the history of economic thought and public finance. He is currently a Marie Skłodowska-Curie postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Economic and Social History, University of Vienna. From January to August 2026 he is a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of History here at Harvard. He holds a PhD in history from King's College London, an MA in intellectual history from UCL and Queen Mary, University of London, and a BSc in government and economics from the LSE.

7 April 2026, 5:00-6:30pm

Robinson Hall Basement Conference Room B21

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