

HES New Initiatives Fund

Proposal

*The Architecture, Experience, and Aftermath of a Financial Disaster:
John Law and the Mississippi Bubble*

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Project narrative

In an effort to marshal resources to meet the escalating demands of war, empire, and state formation, European governments developed a set of sophisticated financial mechanisms around the turn of the eighteenth century. Soon, however, the already impressively complex financial architecture nearly crumbled due to a series of cataclysmic stock market crashes. The South Sea Bubble in England and the Mississippi Bubble in France left the nascent modern culture of credit in disarray. In addition to the important financial innovations, these experiments, in particular the famous “System” directed by the economist, gambler and projector John Law (1671-1729) during the Regency of Philippe d’Orléans, constituted an ambitious effort to remake the social contract and the French monarchy. And, to the extent that it entailed a new way of interpreting the social world and its laws, the “System”, in the words of its principal propagandist, the Abbé Jean Terrasson (1670-1750), can be understood as a new “system of nature” similar to those developed by Copernicus and Galileo.

In this one-day workshop, six scholars explore the conditions that led to the creation of John Law’s financial scheme, the intellectual context in which it became possible for people to believe in modern finance, the role that political ideology played during the bubble, the huge propaganda and counter-propaganda deployed during the experiment, the experience of living during the immediate aftermath of the crash, and the overall geopolitical context of the rise and fall of Law’s system.

The workshop is an effort to create a dialogue between history of economics on the one side and cultural and global history on the other side. The event brings together historians from different subfields in an effort to facilitate conversation and with the hopes of initiating future collaborations. This conference is designed to promote the study of the history of economics within history departments in the United States.

**The Architecture, Experience, and Aftermath of a Financial Disaster:
John Law and the Mississippi Bubble**

Heyman Center, Columbia University

April 24, 2017

Program

Chair:

Carl Wennerlind, Barnard College (USA)

9:15-9:30. Welcome address with breakfast

9:30-11:30. First Session

“The Chamber of Justice and the Rise of John Law”

Erik Goldner, California State, Northridge (USA)

“Magical Politics: John Law's System and State propaganda (1717-1720)”

Arnaud Orain, Université Paris 8 Saint-Denis (France)

11:30-1:30. Lunch

1:30-5:00. Second Session

“The Spirit of Speculation: John Law and Economic Theology in the Age of Lights.”

Charly Coleman, Columbia University (USA)

“Two Days of Financial Panic in the French Countryside: The Mississippi Bubble in the Notarial Archives of La Bastide Clairence (October 30-31, 1720).”

Pierre Force, Columbia University (USA)

3:30-4:00. Coffee break

“The Geopolitics of Global Trade and Public Credit: The South Sea, Mississippi, and Ostend Companies, 1711–1731.”

John Shovlin, New York University (USA)

4:00-5:00. Comments and Discussion

David Bell, Princeton University

6:30. Dinner

Detailed budget (in USD)

<i>Expenditures</i>		<i>Revenues</i>	
Flight Tickets		Columbia. French Dep	500
- LA-NYC (Erik Goldner)	600	Columbia. Heyman Center	1200
- Paris-NYC (Arnaud Orain)	1200		
Accommodation		University Paris 8	500
- 2 nights in NYC (Erik Goldner)	500		
- 2 nights in NYC (Arnaud Orain)	500		
Breakfast, Lunch and Coffee Break	600	History of Economics Society	2000
Dinner	800		
TOTAL	4200	TOTAL	4200

Vita from each Principal Investigator

ORAIN, Arnaud

Full Professor of Economics, University Paris 8 Saint-Denis (France)

Davis Fellow (2015-2016), Center for Historical Studies, Princeton University (USA)

Education

- 2006 – French National Competition for Professorship (*Agrégation des Universités*)
- 2004 – Ph.D in Economics, University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne (Summa cum laude)
- 2000 – MA in Economics, Ecole Normale Supérieure de Fontenay (Summa cum laude)

Awards and Honors

- 2015-2016 – Shelby Cullom Davis Fellowship, Princeton University
- 2015-2016 – National Humanities Center Fellowship (USA) [declined]
- 2015-2016 – Center for the History of Political Economy Fellowship, Duke University [declined]
- 2014-2018 – Incentive rewards for doctoral supervision and research excellence
- 2013 – Young Researcher Award from the European Society for the History of Economic Thought
- 2010-2014 – Incentive rewards for scientific excellence (Prime d'Excellence Scientifique)

Academic and Editorial Duties

- *French Historical Studies*, Editorial Board (jan. 2016-dec. 2018)
- *The European Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, Editorial Board (2014-present)
- *Revue Économique*, Associate editor (2012-present)
- Head of the « History of economics/Economic History » Team, University of Paris 8

Organization of Conferences and Workshops

- [2017] International Conference “Turgot, global history, history of sciences and intellectual history in the Eighteenth-Century”, Archives Nationales de France, June 16-17, 2017
Co-organizer (with L. Charles et A. Conchon)
- [2017] International Workshop Religion, “Natural Rights and Political Economy in the Enlightenment, Stanford University”, April 28, 2017
Co-organizer (with D. Edelstein)
- [2014] International Workshops *Campus Condorcet*, “The Political Economy of the Enlightenment: between practices and ideas”, EHESS, INED, University Paris 1 and University Paris 8, Paris, April 4 and May 6, 2014.
Co-organizer (with L. Charles)
- [2013] International Conference “Antiphysocracy. Critiques and opposition to the physiocratic movement, from the end of the 1750s to the mid-19th Century”, University Paris 8 and University Lyon 2, April 12-13, 2013.
Principal organizer. Member of the organizing and scientific committee
- [2010] International Conference “Institutions in Economic Thought, 13th International Conference of the Charles Gide Association”, University Paris 1 and University Paris 9, May 27-29, 2010.
Member of the organizing and scientific committee
- [2005] Workshop “Jean-Joseph-Louis Graslin: Économie et urbanisme au temps des Lumières”, University of Nantes, June 30, 2005.
Co-organizer (with Ph. Le Pichon)

WENNERLIND, Carl

Associate Professor of History, Barnard College, Columbia University (USA)
Davis Fellow (2016-2017), Center for Historical Studies, Princeton University (USA)

Education

- 1999 – University of Texas at Austin. PhD. Economics

Awards and Honors

- 2016-2017 – Fellow, Shelby Cullom Davis Center, Princeton University
- 2015 – Corresponding Member, Center for Historical Enquiry and the Social Sciences. Yale University
- May 2016 – Visiting Fellow. Center for Research in the Arts, Social Science, and Humanities. University of Cambridge [Postponed]
- Spring 2015 – Lecturer, Folger Shakespeare Library, Early Modern History of Political Economy
- May 2014 – Visiting Scholar, Moore Institute, National University, Galway, Ireland
- 2012 – Awarded the Association for Social Economics' Warren Samuels Prize
- November 211 – Visiting Professor at the Finance Academy under the Government of the Russian Federation, Moscow
- 2006 – Awarded the European Society for the History of Economic Thought's History of Economic Analysis Award for Best Article
- 2006 – Awarded the History of Economics Society's Best Article Prize

Academic and Editorial Duties

- *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Editorial Board (2013-)
- *Economies et Sociétés*, Advisory Board (2012-)

Selected Grants

- Shelby Cullom Davis Center, Princeton University. 2016-7
- Wenner-Gren Foundation, Sweden. (\$25,000). 2014.
- ACLS, Charles A. Ryskamp Research Fellowship. (\$78,000). Awarded 2011. Held 2013-4.
- Institute for New Economic Thinking (INET) Grant. Awarded 2011. Held 2012-3.
- Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, Sweden. Research grant to support the project "Science and Economy: The Development of Swedish Political Economy, 1600-1800," with Nathalie Le Bouteillec and Anders Ögren (\$15,000). 2011-2.
- Wenner-Gren Foundation, Sweden. (\$30,000). 2011.
- Jan Wallanders och Tom Hedelius Stiftelse, Handelsbanken, Sweden. (\$4,000). 2011.
- National Endowment for the Humanities. (\$6,000). 2008.
- American Philosophical Society. Sabbatical Fellowship (\$35,000). 2007.