



WELHMA Series

Institute for Medieval Research, University of Nottingham

Prof Michele Campopiano

An Environmental History of the Middle Ages for the 21st Century: Methods and Research Lines

10 November 2025 @ 13.30

Microsoft Teams: [Click the Link](#)

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Abstract:

The recent rise in the popularity of environmental history is undoubtedly linked to the urgency and pressure of contemporary environmental issues. These challenges have prompted a reworking of the field's theoretical and conceptual frameworks. Even the very concept of nature has become the subject of intense debate among sociologists, philosophers, historians, and literary critics.

This problem is particularly significant when it comes to the Middle Ages—an era that is itself difficult to define. The conventional geographical and chronological boundaries of this period must be reconsidered in light of historiography's increasing sensitivity to global issues. At the same time, the relationship between the history of “thought” and that of “social” or “political” structures is being redefined. This shift has also prompted a renewed consideration of the connections between environmental history and intellectual history—particularly important for understanding the evolving and contested “idea” of nature.

Moreover, the Middle Ages—as constructed largely through European and American scholarly traditions—has long been shaped by both stereotypes and deeply ideological debates. These include discussions about the origins of the so-called “West,” its supposed uniqueness in its relationship with the environment, and the influence of Christian culture on that relationship.

What challenges does the environmental historian face today in addressing these complex issues? And how might contemporary theoretical and ideological debates help historians refocus their perspectives on the medieval environment?

