



**Vigilanz
Kulturen**
SFB 1369

Conference, Munich, 2026, May 7-8

Clothing and Vigilance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe

This conference highlights the interplay between clothing habits and vigilance in various contexts in late medieval and early modern Europe, with a focus on sensory perception, disguise, mistrust, questions of identity and shame, and the problem of latency, i.e., the potential to conceal something through clothing or to suspect something to be concealed because of a particular clothing practice. Building on existing research on sumptuary laws, the theatre and the history of clothing, while responding to new archival discoveries and recent work on the concept of vigilance, the conference asks who ensures that bodies are dressed in accordance with legal, social, and moral expectations? We seek to avoid a top-down approach and focus on the specific situations and mechanisms in which clothing became the object of increased attention on the part of authorities, ordinary people, and in artistic contexts.

A special interest lies on practices of covering, veiling, and dissimulating, but also on considerations on appropriate attire of officeholders. Clothing created social readability but also harboured ambiguities and suspicion. We particularly welcome contributions on practices of covering, veiling, and dissimulating, and also on public displays of power such as the attire of officeholders.

We have invited contributions from across the humanities. Legal historians will analyse mechanisms of enforcing sumptuary laws and the role of denunciation. In this context, forms of public vigilance on clothing are of special interest: in which spaces, times and contexts did infringements of (sumptuary) clothing rules become visible and readable to various participants in legal institutions? Literary scholars will examine how clothing functions in early modern English drama, particularly how garments of concealment generate suspense and raise questions about identity and deception. Historians will examine how covering faces and bodies enabled certain actions, but also triggered social anxieties in urban areas around demands for transparency.

Venue: Internationales Begegnungszentrum der Wissenschaft
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Schedule

Thursday, May 7

- 10:30–11:00 Arndt Brendecke, Susanne Lepsius, and Claudia Olk:
Welcome and Introduction
- 11:00–12:00 Wolfram Aichinger (Vienna):
Cloaked shame, revealed birth:
Clothing and the Cádiz Foundling Home, 1696–1730
- 12:00–13:30 Lunch
- 13:30–14:30 Elena Brizio (Siena/Florence):
The political and social control of women's clothing in Early Modern Siena
- 14:30–15:30 Lorenzo Tanzini (Cagliari):
The practice of sumptuary laws:
Clothing and vigilance in Florence (late 14th – early 15th century)
- 15:30–16:00 Coffee break
- 16:00–17:00 Mia Korpiola (Turku):
“To steadily remain in the garments best suited to their calling”:
Clerics, clothing and sumptuary regulation in Early Modern Sweden
- 17:00–18:00 Heikki Pihlajamäki (Helsinki):
Controlling clothing rules in the seventeenth-century Dutch East Indies
- 19:00 Conference Dinner

Friday, May 8

- 09:00–10:00 Catherine Richardson (East Anglia):
Civic clothing and urban display:
Performing authority in sixteenth and seventeenth century English towns
- 10:00–10:30 Coffee break
- 11:00–12:00 Maria Hayward (Southampton):
Ducal, civic and individual interests:
Enforcing and evading sumptuary law during James, duke of York's time in
Edinburgh, 1679-1682
- 12:00 Ulinka Rublack (Cambridge/Munich):
Commentary
- 12:30 Conclusion and farewell