

CLIOMETRICS IN THE ANCIENT WORLD: DATA, METHODS AND CHALLENGES

Workshop at Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) in collaboration with
Ghent University

Patronized by the Roman Society Research Center

May 9, 2025

Cliometrics is often associated with the study of pre-industrial societies, particularly those of the early modern period and, less frequently, the Middle Ages. By contrast, the ancient world has long been seen as less suited to such approaches. Recent advances, however, have demonstrated significant progress in measuring the economic performance of ancient societies. Nevertheless, the application of cliometric methods remains one of the foremost challenges facing historians, archaeologists, and economists.

This workshop aims to explore recent developments in this field, highlighting advancements in data collection, methodologies, and quantitative tools that bring the ancient world closer to cliometric analysis. By fostering interdisciplinary dialogue, the event seeks to shed light on both the potential and the limitations of applying cliometrics to ancient economic history.

The workshop will be held at Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Pleinlaan 2, 1050 Etterbeek, in the Learning & Innovation Center (LIC, building S*, Board Room, see campus plan below). Participation is free, both in person and online, but registration is required on our website: <https://sites.google.com/uniupo.it/cliometrics/registration-and-info?authuser=0>

Find more information on the website: <https://sites.google.com/uniupo.it/cliometrics>

The chair of the workshop: Koen Verboven (UGent)

Organizing committee: Silvio Traverso (Università del Piemonte Orientale), Luigi Oddo (Vrije Universiteit Brussel), Maxime Smits (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

14:00 Welcome address

14:15 Panel I - Measuring Wealth and Crisis in the Roman World

Erfurth, P.E. (New York University) *Estimating Income Inequality in Rural Roman Egypt.*

Hartley, T. (Universität zu Köln) *Sufficiency, shocks, and diminishing returns: The Crises of the Roman Republic.*

Taelman, D. (Vrije Universiteit Brussel) *Marble as Economic Proxy: Quantifying the Consumption and Distribution of Decorative Stone in the Roman World.*

Traverso, S. (Università del Piemonte Orientale) *Economic Dynamics of the Early Roman Empire: Insights from Lead Pollution, Coinage, Weather, and War* (with Oddo, L., and Verboven, K.)

15:35 Coffee break

16:00 Panel II - Transitions and Trends: Economic and Social Metrics Across Eras

Adamson, J. (Universität Leipzig) *Peace and its correlates in the Ancient World* (with Fitzsimmons, P.R.).

Martinez, M. (Università di Pisa) *Assessing Ancient Inequalities: Hellenistic Delos* (with Battistoni, F.).

Oddo, L. (Vrije Universiteit Brussel) *Climate, Agriculture, and Economic Stability: Reassessing the Impact of Weather on Tuscany in the 16th–17th Century* (with Erdkamp, P.).

17:00 Closing remarks

19:00 Workshop dinner at nearby venue

HOW TO GET THERE?

From Brussels Airport

Brussels Airport is located about 10km from the VUB Main Campus. There are 2 direct trains per hour from Brussels Airport railway station to Etterbeek station next to the VUB Main Campus. This train will take you in 25 minutes to the campus.

From Brussels South Charleroi Airport

Brussels South Charleroi Airport is located about 50km from Brussels. Shuttle bus connections are operated between the airport and Brussels-Midi railway station. From Brussels-Midi you can take the train to Etterbeek station next to the VUB Main Campus.

Check out the timetable of the shuttle bus here: <https://www.flibco.com/en>

Campus plan Vrije Universiteit Brussel Etterbeek

**The Learning & Innovation Center located in building S*

