



Call For Papers

The Influence of American Freemasonry and Fraternalism on 20th Century Politics, Society and Culture

University College Roosevelt, Middelburg, the Netherlands, 3 October 2020

At the start of the 20th century, the USA still lived in what some have qualified as the “golden age of fraternity”. Indeed, joining fraternal societies such as the Freemasons, the Odd Fellows, the Knights of Pythias and many hundreds like them was an essential feature of social and cultural life in the country. Although membership has declined since the 1930s, fraternal societies have continued to be more prevalent in American society than in Europe. Freemasonry and other similar orders have always proclaimed an apolitical stance, yet their political influence cannot be dismissed. This is not a concession to conspiracy: America was not secretly run by the lodges. But that does not imply that fraternal societies could not have more modest political objectives or that politicians did not try to mobilize support within their ranks. Already in the 19th century several examples are known of fraternities being founded to back up specific party tickets. Some orders were actively opposing immigration of particular groups. Even within apolitical societies, men running for public office did not hesitate to approach their brethren to obtain their votes. Was this still the case in 20th-century America? Did fraternal societies intervene in the electoral process? What fields of decision making were prone to see fraternal societies use lobbying tactics to foster their interests or values? Did the orders defend specific ideological positions? How much were sectional, religious, ethnical, gender and racial divisions relevant to the issue? The event will contribute to the inclusion of the study of fraternal societies as a serious, empirically grounded sub-section of political history.

University College Roosevelt (UCR) will host an international and interdisciplinary conference to explore these matters. The College was named after the American presidents Theodore and Franklin D. Roosevelt, who were both members of American masonic lodges. The conference will focus on the political influence of fraternal societies and the wider social and cultural significance of this. The conference will also include an undergraduate research session, where students from UCR (and other liberal arts colleges) can present their capstone work or undergraduate research thesis.

Interested participants should send an abstract (250-500 words) to the local organizer of the conference, by e-mail: b.mosselmans@ucr.nl. All proposals will be reviewed by the members of the scientific committee (see below). The deadline for submitting the abstract is 1 November 2018. Participants will be informed before 1 February 2019 whether their proposal was accepted. The final paper must be submitted before 1 February 2020. A discussant will be assigned to each paper. At the conference, the author of the paper should present a summary in 20 minutes. Then the discussant will have 5 minutes to provide comments, and another 5 minutes will be reserved for questions from the audience. Selected papers will be peer-reviewed and published in a special issue of *Journal for Research into Freemasonry and Fraternalism*.

The members of the scientific committee are:

Jeffrey Tyssens (chair)	Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium)
Kristofer Allerfeldt	University of Exeter (UK)
Jan C. Jansen	German Historical Institute, Washington (USA)
Kees van der Pijl	emeritus University of Sussex (UK)
Albert Clement	University College Roosevelt (Netherlands)
Giles Scott-Smith	Roosevelt Institute for American Studies (Netherlands)
Bert Mosselmans (local organizer)	University College Roosevelt (Netherlands)

The contribution to the Conference will be €80, which includes coffee, lunch, dinner and conference materials. The Conference will be located in the Roosevelt Conference Center, in Middelburg, the Netherlands. The Roosevelt Conference Center, part of University College Roosevelt and Utrecht University, is housed in one of the Netherlands most beautiful buildings: the former, late gothic-style, city hall of Middelburg located centrally on the “Markt” in Middelburg. The Conference Center is an exclusive location for congresses, (international) events, receptions and workshops aimed at science & education, governmental & social organizations and NGO events.

The conference will start on Saturday at 8:30 with coffee. The conference will be officially opened at 9:00 (in the gothic “Burgerzaal”) and start with a commencement lecture by our keynote speaker. Starting at 10:00, different sessions with paper presentations will be held in the UCR conference rooms. Lunch will be served at 13:00 and dinner at 19:00. The conference will coincide with the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the masonic lodge “La Compagnie Durable” in Middelburg. There will be some side events, such as a guided city tour for partners (including a visit to the lodge building), music performances and art presentations. Conference participants can reserve a room in one of the many hotels that are available in Middelburg, a list will be provided by the organizers.

