

**Crossing Boundaries, Fostering Dialogue: Humanities, Academia and the City of Rome**

October 19-20, 2026

“Crossing Boundaries, Fostering Dialogue” brings together a two-part program: a *giornata di studi*, *Boundaries and Intersections in Premodern Italy* (October 19), featuring interdisciplinary presentations by postdoctoral scholars; and a roundtable, *Boundaries of Academia: Impact, Careers, and the Postdoctoral Condition* (October 20), focused on the professional and structural challenges faced by early-career academics.

The postdoctoral *giornata di studi* invites early-career scholars—especially, though not exclusively, those who are or have been affiliated with Notre Dame and the Università degli Studi “Roma Tre”—to explore the theme of “boundaries” in its broadest sense and to present their work. The roundtable will consist of an open discussion with senior academics and experts reflecting on pressing questions concerning the direction of academia and the relationship between contemporary culture and premodern studies.

Call for papers - *Boundaries and Intersections in Premodern Italy*  
(October 19, 2026)

The *giornata di studi* invites reflection on how boundaries both define and destabilize. Boundaries expose the fragility of inclusion and exclusion, shape identities, delimit canons, construct centers and margins, and separate the sacred from secular, political from literary, the human from the non-human. Yet they are never static: negotiated, contested, transgressed, and redrawn across time and space.

Premodern culture offers especially fertile ground for examining this inherent fluidity. The porous threshold between theology and poetry in Dante Alighieri’s *Divine Comedy* unsettles distinctions between revelation and fiction, authority and imagination—a tension that resurfaced in intellectual debates following the sixteenth-century rediscovery of Aristotle’s *Poetics*. Communities such as the Beguines—lay religious women who lived in semi-monastic settings without taking permanent vows—occupied an ambiguous space between cloister and city, autonomy and obedience. Figures like Hadewijch and Catherine of Siena further complicated gendered and ecclesiastical divisions: as visionary writers and spiritual advisors, they claimed forms of theological authority typically reserved for ordained men while remaining formally outside clerical structures. The geographic and epistemological frontiers opened in the wake of the voyages of discovery likewise reconfigured Europe’s understanding of the world and of itself. These examples represent only a few of the many research strands and interpretive paths the conference seeks to explore, inviting participants to trace additional sites where social, textual, intellectual, and spiritual boundaries were constructed, contested, and transformed. By tracing these shifting lines, the conference aims to investigate how they shaped premodern societies while simultaneously enabling new configurations of knowledge, identity, and belief.

We welcome contributions engaging historical, theoretical, literary, musical, philosophical, theological, or cultural perspectives. Comparative and transnational approaches are particularly encouraged. The forum is conceived as a space for sustained intellectual exchange; work in progress is therefore warmly welcomed. Possible lines of inquiry include, but are not limited to:

- Disciplinary boundaries and interdisciplinarity
- Political and cultural borders
- Religious and secular divides
- Marginality and centrality

- Canon formation and exclusion
- Linguistic, geographic, and intellectual frontiers
- The human/non-human divide
- Gendered boundaries, social roles, and structures of authority

#### Submission guidelines

Paper proposals accompanied by a title, a 300-word abstract, and a short bio-bibliographical profile needs to be submitted on [Submittable](#) by June 30, 2026.

The participation in the event is free and includes lunch and refreshments on both days.

**Funding is available to cover travel expenses for six Notre Dame applicants whose papers are accepted.**