

# DRAFT

## 2026 HARMSWORTH CONFERENCE

The Meanings of Independence:  
The American Declaration in Global Context, 1776-1826

Rothermere American Institute  
University of Oxford  
19-20 March 2026

Conveners:  
Eliga Gould (New Hampshire) and Patrick Griffin (Notre Dame)

The Declaration of Independence, whose 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary Americans will observe in 2026, is the United States' founding text, but it was also a transformational international text. Although Congress's main purpose was to declare thirteen of Britain's American colonies to be free and independent states, the Declaration's words and example spoke to audiences well beyond the new union's borders. Convened by Eliga Gould and Patrick Griffin, Harmsworth Professors, respectively, for 2025-26 and 2022-23, this conference will explore some of the implications of that wider message. In addition to the response to the Declaration in Britain, Ireland, and Europe, we anticipate presentations that focus on North America's Indian country, Haiti and the Caribbean, Sierra Leone and West Africa, and China and British India. Participants will be encouraged to approach their topic from the broadest possible social and cultural contexts, paying particular attention to how categories of race and class, as well as gender and sexuality, mediated what independence meant. As the choice of 1826 as the conference's endpoints, we hope to include presentations on the Spanish American Revolutions that extended the quest for independence throughout the Western Hemisphere. 1826 was also the year that two of the main architects of American independence, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, died, both on July 4.

<b>Thursday, 19 March</b>
<b>Welcome Reception – 2:00</b> Coffee and tea
<b>WELCOME — 2:30 to 3:00 pm</b> Adam Smith (Oxford) Opening Remarks: Eliga Gould (New Hampshire) and Patrick Griffin (Notre Dame)
<b>1. Origins — 3:00 to 4:30</b> James Fichter (Hong Kong) Eric Hinderaker (Utah) Christa Dierksheide (Virginia) Response: Andrew Edwards (St. Andrews)
<b>Break – 4:30- 5:00</b>

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**KEYNOTE — 5:00-6:00**

Peter Mancall (Southern California) — “What Makes a Revolution?”

Response: Nicholas Guyatt (Cambridge)

**Wine Reception - 6:00-6:45****Friday, 20 March****Coffee and Tea- 9:00- 9:15****2. Declarations — 9:15 to 10:30 am**

Steve Sarson (Jean Moulin)

Ashli White (Miami)

Carine Lounissi (Rouen)

Response: Brendan McConville (Boston)

**Break****3. Connections — 10:45 am to 12:30 pm**

Lisa Ford (George Washington)

Bertrand Van Ruymbeke (Paris 8)

Ian McBride (Oxford)

Response: Andrew O’Shaughnessy (Virginia)

**LUNCH****4. Fractures — 1:45 to 3:00 pm**

William Anthony Hay (Arizona State)

Grace Mallon (Oxford)

Eduardo Posado-Carbo (Oxford)

Response: Emily West (Oxford)

**Break****5. Outcomes — 3:30 to 4:45 pm**

Christopher Brown (Columbia)

Mark Peterson (Yale)

Joanna Innes (Oxford)

Response: Rosemarie Zagarri (George Mason)

**Break**

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**KEYNOTE — 5:00 to 6:00 pm**

Annette Gordon-Reed (Harvard): “The Declaration of Independence and American Identity at 250”

Response: Francis Cogliano (Edinburgh)

**WRAP-UP — 6:00-6:30**

Eliga Gould and Patrick Griffin

**Reception – 6:30-7:00**