



Gender and Conservatism in U.S. History

**Roosevelt Institute for American Studies
Middelburg, The Netherlands
April 8-10, 2026**

The Roosevelt Institute for American Studies (RIAS) invites submissions of paper proposals for a conference on gender and conservatism in U.S. history, to be held in Middelburg, the Netherlands, on April 8-10, 2026.

We are pleased to announce that Professor Lisa McGirr (Harvard University) will deliver the keynote address.

Conservatism – a broad-based ideology consisting of anti-egalitarianism, anti-statism, anti-communism, free market capitalism, and traditionalism – has exploded in popularity in recent decades, both as a political movement and as a dynamic field of historical inquiry. While frequently portrayed as an inherently masculine domain, recent scholarship has underscored the centrality of women and other non-male actors in the shaping of conservative politics and ideology. This conference aims to draw on such scholarship and move further beyond narratives of traditional masculinity by foregrounding the role of women and genderqueer people as agents in the history of American conservatism. It seeks to deepen our understanding of American conservatism by exploring how organizers, thinkers, voters and cultural figures of different genders have helped to mold conservative movements and ideologies over time.

At the same time, this conference aims to make a contribution to the historiography of gender and conservatism by shifting the focus from how conservative actors and ideas have influenced gender-based issues (e.g., reproductive rights, family policy) to how gender itself has shaped conservative ideology. We invite scholars to consider how ideas about femininity, masculinity and other gender identities have fundamentally informed conservative thought and activism. In doing so, the conference invites broader reflections on how gender conceptions have structured conservative theories and practices, offering a framework for rethinking the political and cultural boundaries of American conservatism.

Finally, this conference seeks to move beyond the conventional postwar periodization that centers the conservative ascendancy of the late twentieth century, particularly within the Republican Party. Instead, we encourage contributions that use gender analyses to explore the

deeper historical roots and broader agency of conservatism, tracing its ideological and institutional developments from the early republic through to the present.

We particularly welcome submissions that engage with, but are not limited to:

- Non-male conservative activism in the nineteenth and early twentieth century: nativism, maternalism, eugenics, anti-suffrage, temperance, anti-vice campaigns, and opposition to obscenity.
- Women's politics and conservative ideology in the early republic, antebellum era and beyond: republican motherhood, female slaveholders, cult of true womanhood, gendered defenses of white supremacy.
- Intersectional and multicultural conservatism: the roles of women of color in advancing and shaping conservative politics across different historical periods.
- Philosophy and political thought: gendered dimensions of conservative intellectual traditions; how gendered assumptions inform concepts such as liberty, order, authority, natural rights or moral hierarchy in political thought from the founding era to the present.
- Political engagement: far-right populism, fascism, anti-communism, massive resistance to civil rights, states' rights activism and other (grassroots) movements that have been shaped by non-male actors; centrality of gender to its ideology.
- Capitalism and neoliberalism: women's support for free market principles, resistance to New Deal and welfare expansion, the gendered dimensions of neoliberal thought.
- Religion and theology: the role of gender in the politicization of religion, including the rise of evangelicalism and the gendered interpretations of religious doctrine.
- Militarism and patriotism: gendered expressions of patriotism and support for military strength and national security; conservative women's roles in promoting martial values, defense policy and patriotic education.
- Anti-statism: gendered critiques of federal power and government intervention; promotion of self-reliance, family governance and private authority structures.
- American empire: gendered connections between domestic conservative ideology and support for U.S. imperial ambitions abroad.
- Education: activism around public education and curriculum content; debates over sex education, parental rights and censorship.

We invite scholars interested in presenting their research at the conference to send a 300-word abstract and a brief CV (in one pdf file) to info@roosevelt.nl by **October 31, 2025**. To support a culture of inclusion, we strongly encourage proposals that reflect the diversity of our field in terms of gender, ethnicity, and disability.

The conference will take the form of a small-scale in-person gathering aimed at fostering rich intellectual exchange and collegial collaboration across career stages. Participants will be

asked to submit a draft of their paper by March 9, 2026, for pre-circulation among attendees. The conference will serve as the foundation for a planned edited volume, bringing together a set of essays that advance scholarship in U.S. women's history and the history of conservatism. Please note that the RIAS will cover meals and accommodation for conference presenters.

For more information, please reach out to the conference convenor, Jeanine Quené, at j.quene@roosevelt.nl.