

Who's Afraid of Gender in Italy?

Organized by
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Sponsored by the Queer Caucus

The panel *Who's Afraid of Gender in Italy?* invites contributions that explore the Italian debate on gender and sexual difference in its historical, cultural, and political dimensions. We seek to reconstruct the genealogy of these concepts, examine their appropriation in media and political discourse, and imagine new forms of feminist, queer, and trans-feminist alliance. How did Italy become one of the European countries most resistant to gender studies? Why does *gender* provoke such anxiety across ideological lines, including within certain strands of feminist thought and political lesbianism? And how might a genealogical and practice-based perspective help move beyond theoretical impasses to foster shared resistance to patriarchal, anti-trans, and illiberal politics? This panel calls for a rethinking of feminist and queer practices as shared forms of resistance within a fragile democracy increasingly challenged by authoritarian and reactionary forces. We welcome historical, theoretical, and activist perspectives addressing feminism, queer and trans politics, media discourse, religion, and the cultural uses of “gender ideology.”

Possible paper topics include (but are not limited to):

- Genealogy of *gender* and *sexual difference* in Italian feminist thought
- Black, Marxist, queer, and trans-feminist perspectives in Italy
- *Pensiero della differenza sessuale* and its local and global impact
- Radical, materialist, and lesbian feminisms and their contested legacy in contemporary Italy
- Anti-gender rhetoric and trans-exclusionary narratives in LGB communities
- Feminism, Catholicism, and the rhetoric of “gender ideology”
- The DDL Zan, media representation, and LGBTQIA+ politics
- Emerging feminist, queer, and trans alliances and activism
- Comparative perspectives on Italy and transnational anti-gender movements
- The cultural politics of fear: why *gender* unsettles Italian democracy

Please submit a 200–250-word abstract and a short bio (100 words) to Alessandra Montalbano (amontalbano@ua.edu) and Irene Villa (Irene.villa93@gmail.com) by December 15, 2025.