



**UNIVERSITÉ
DE LORRAINE**



CONFÉRENCE

**THE ORIGINS OF THE
VOTING 'GENDER GAP' IN
THE UNITED STATES:**

**LIBERALISM,
CONSERVATISM,
AND PUBLIC OPINION
C. 1950 – C. 1968**

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5 avril 2023, 17h30 – 19h

Campus LSH (Nancy), salle A311 et via [Teams](#)



PRÉSENTATION

Conventional wisdom, both popular and in many cases scholarly, suggests that the arrival of the voting 'gender gap' that is now a significant aspect of US electoral politics took place in 1980, when Ronald Reagan won the presidency. By contrast, during the period after the Nineteenth Amendment, which effectively extended voting rights to women, it was often assumed that political opinion did not differ between women and men. In searching for the roots of the gender gap, this paper explores the 1950s and 1960s. It finds, first, that contemporary politicians often believed that gender-related differences were a dimension of electoral politics with some significance, with women understood as more likely to support conservative ideas especially on foreign policy. Second, it shows that the convergence between conservatism and populism that developed in the 1960s – represented by politicians such as Barry Goldwater and George Wallace – seemed to appeal more strongly to men than women. It would, however, take time before stronger support among men for conservatism and stronger support among women for liberalism were registered in the polls as the modern gender gap. Not only the Republicans' turn towards populism but also the Democrats' friendliness to diversity then helped to consolidate its emergence.



CONFÉRENCIER

Robert Mason is a professor of U.S. history at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. He is the author of *Richard Nixon and the Quest for a New Majority* (University of North Carolina Press, 2004) and *The Republican Party and American Politics from Hoover to Reagan* (Cambridge University Press, 2012). With Iwan Morgan he is coeditor of *Seeking a New Majority: American Politics and the Republican Party, 1960–1980* (Vanderbilt University Press, 2013) and *The Liberal Consensus Reconsidered: American Society and Politics in the Postwar Era* (University Press of Florida, 2017). With Patrick Andelic and Mark McLay he is coeditor of *Midterms and Mandates: Electoral Reassessments of Presidents and Parties* (Edinburgh University Press, 2022). He is completing a book about Spiro Agnew, and his current research is on the history of the voting ‘gender gap’ in the United States.

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