

Cambridge Festival celebrates pioneering women for international women's day

Ahead of International Women's Day, the Cambridge Festival (19 March – 4 April) is celebrating some of the remarkable contributions of women across diverse fields.

From philosophy and music to AI and cosmology, the festival will highlight the pioneering work of women who have shaped our understanding of the world in profound ways.

These events underscore the importance of acknowledging and elevating women's contributions to academia, science, and culture. Here is a selection of the key events to look out for:

Why We Study So Few Women Philosophers – and How to Change That

20 March, Online

This thought-provoking event will explore the historical exclusion of women from the field of philosophy. While figures like Socrates, Plato, and Descartes dominate philosophical narratives, women philosophers have long been marginalized. This session will examine the challenges women have faced in being recognised as legitimate philosophers and how we can change the current academic approach to include their important contributions.

Margaret Masterman's Panoramix Game

21 March

In a 1975 lecture at Bedford College, London, Margaret Masterman introduced the Panoramix Game to analyse the gender imbalance in academia. As a philosopher and computational linguist, Masterman founded the Cambridge Language Research Unit and co-founded Lucy Cavendish College. The game uses binary grids to model arguments, highlighting the hidden biases in the argument that women's lack of representation in academia isn't discriminatory. By revealing omitted data and causal links, the game challenges assumptions and forces players to reconsider the structure of the issue. At this event, participants will explore the game with current data on women in academia, while reflecting on Masterman's legacy, her vision for Lucy Cavendish, and her pioneering work in computational sociology.

Love and Friendship in the Archive: Amélie Bosquet and Gustave Flaubert

22 March

Join Dr Victoria Baena for a talk exploring the complex friendship between feminist activist and novelist Amélie Bosquet and author Gustave Flaubert. Through their letters, Baena unveils Bosquet's life as a progressive woman balancing literature, activism, and personal desires, while reflecting on the overlooked stories of women in the archive. The session also highlights never-before-translated letters between Bosquet and Flaubert.

Fasting, Food, and Women's Religious Spaces

25 March

In this unique event, scholars will explore the role of women in shaping religious spaces within Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, focusing on how women experience and influence these environments. The discussion will highlight the empowering role of food-sharing practices in religious communities. Following the lecture, a spread of foods will be shared, offering a communal experience tied to the event's themes.

Discovering the Piano Works of Russian Composer Valentina Serova (1846–1924)

29 March

Valentina Serova, a Russian composer often overlooked in music history, will be the focus of this lecture-recital. Attendees will learn about Serova's life and music, including her piano works and operatic compositions, while also exploring her intellectual and artistic circles. This event offers a rare chance to experience her music, which has not been performed beyond the Russian Empire until recently.

Scientific Women at the Whipple Museum

29 March

This event shines a light on the often-forgotten women in science. Through the stories of pioneering women such as Rosalind Franklin, this event will explore the significant but overlooked contributions of women in science. Attendees will learn about women scientists who have shaped history but whose names are often omitted from traditional scientific narratives.

All in Her Mind: Women's Mental Health

2 April

A powerful discussion on the unique mental health challenges faced by women, this event will feature Dr Kate Womersley, Dr Linda Gask, and Dr Rebecca Lawrence. The panel will address issues such as the stigma surrounding mental illness, the barriers women face in accessing the help they need, and the myths and misinformation that persist about women's mental health.

From Sponges to AI: New Technologies for Finding Cancer Early

3 April

At the Early Cancer Institute, groundbreaking innovations in early cancer detection will be discussed, including a pioneering sponge test for identifying oesophageal cancer. Professors Rebecca Fitzgerald and Mireia Crispin will share their research on the early detection of cancer and how new technologies, led by women in science, are reshaping the future of cancer diagnostics.

Decoding the Cosmos with Professor Hiranya Peiris

4 April

Professor Hiranya Peiris, the first woman to hold the prestigious Professorship of Astronomy at Cambridge, will share her research on the evolution of the Universe, dark matter, and dark energy. As a leading figure in cosmology, Professor Peiris will explore how cutting-edge research is reshaping our understanding of the cosmos and the role women are playing in this transformative field.

Zoe Smith, Deputy Festival Manager, said: "These events represent a very small selection of the groundbreaking work by women that will be showcased at the Cambridge Festival. They provide a platform for engaging with thought-provoking discussions, cutting-edge research, and inspiring stories. Each event offers a chance to learn about the significant, yet often overlooked, contributions that women have made in shaping our world across history and into the present day.

"By highlighting the work of pioneering women across diverse fields, our aim at the Festival is to not only educate but also inspire future generations to challenge the status quo and push the boundaries of what is possible. Whatever you're interested in, come along, participate, celebrate, and learn. And let's come together to honour and amplify the voices of women around the world."

-Ends-

For further details visit www.cam.ac.uk

Press images are available [here](#) | Festival images are available [here](#).

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About the Cambridge Festival

The Cambridge Festival is an annual multidisciplinary event that brings together the University of Cambridge's cutting-edge research and creative thinking. Offering a diverse array of events across science, technology, health, arts, humanities, and social sciences, the festival invites all to explore new ideas, engage with experts, and engage in conversations that shape our understanding of the world.

About the University of Cambridge

The University of Cambridge, founded in 1209, is one of the world's oldest and most prestigious academic institutions. With a commitment to research excellence and global impact, the university continues to lead in education and innovation across a wide range of disciplines. It remains at the forefront of scientific discovery, social progress, and cultural understanding.