Call for Papers

50th Annual Meeting of the Social Sciences History Association
The Palmer House Hilton, Chicago, Illinois – November 20th-23rd, 2025
<u>Submission Deadline: March 1st, 2025</u>

Complexity and its Consequences

"History is indeed little more than the register of crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind" or so wrote Edward Gibbon some two centuries ago. Over time we have come to interpret this tendency less as the result of individual errors and more as a result of large-scale historical processes that depend on emergent and structural forces outside of the direct control of any one individual. Previous eras may have thought of these effects through the lens of tragedy, fate, or paradox. In the present, we might consider at least some subset as the result of the complexity of social organization.

Complexity makes exact predictions difficult, but progress has been made in understanding and identifying, and even analyzing and modeling emergent phenomenon, interdependence in systems, network properties, feedback loops, multiple chains of causation, and dynamic processes. How can we put complexity science and its tools to work to improve our understanding of historical processes, unintended consequences, cultural evolution, social coordination, and social change?

The 2025 Program Committee welcomes individual papers and panels on all aspects of social science history. It is especially interested in papers and panels that apply concepts and tools for studying complex processes to history. Topics of particular interest include the following:

- Can we distinguish between contingency and emergence in history? Has our understanding of the balance between structure and agency changed?
- Have the limits to historical explanation changed over time with the introduction of new methods of analysis, new concepts, and new data sources?
- What are the limitations of new tools of analysis, such as AI?
- How can AI tools be used to build new more detailed and site-specific computational models of historical change?
- How can we use new AI tools to harvest more systematic and relational data from the historical record, such as translating early modern type into text readable formats?
- How can we better understand the role of social networks in social change?
- Can the historical record be better leveraged to build insight into resolving social coordination problems?
- Can history help us understand aggregation and scaling up problems and other hard to predict social outcomes that result from complexity and interdependence?
- What are the methods that hold the most promise for the capturing the complexity of history?

Information on how to submit proposals can be found online at the SSHA website: <u>www.ssha.org</u>

<u>Program Committee:</u>	<u>SSHA President:</u>
Matthew Nelson, chair	Emily Erikson
Matthew Norton	
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