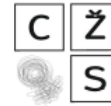




SVEUČILIŠTE U RIJECI
Filozofski fakultet

Adresa: Sveučilišna avenija 4
51 000 Rijeka
Hrvatska
Telefon: +385 (51) 265-600; +385 (51) 265-602
E-mail: dekanat@ffri.uniri.hr
Web: www.ffri.uniri.hr



International Interdisciplinary Conference

Virginity: Histories, Discourses, Imaginaries

Dates: 4-5 March 2027

Venue: Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka & INNOVA LAB, University of Rijeka, Rijeka, Croatia

Format: The conference will be held in person.

Organised by: Centre for Women's Studies & Centre for Iconographic Studies
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka

Call for Papers

Virginity is a multifaceted and historically shaped concept located at the crossroads of the body, sexuality, morality, religion, law, politics, and representation. It is a space where the norms and institutions that regulate intimacy meet with the narratives and symbolic systems that assign social importance to “purity,” “chastity,” and “integrity,” as well as with the lived experiences of individuals positioned within these frameworks in various, often hierarchical, ways. From antiquity and the Middle Ages to the present, virginity has been part of a complex web of symbols through which societies have envisioned integrity and sanctity, along with threat, bodily control, and the potential for resistance, transgression, and reversal.

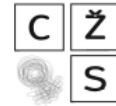
Virginity remains a powerful cultural symbol, influencing moral standards and gender hierarchies and, in some contexts, closely linked to marriage economies and family “honour”. Conversely, lacking “proof” of virginity can lead to stigma, social exclusion, violence, or moral shame. A persistent myth is the association of virginity with an “intact” hymen, along with the belief that sexual history—especially women’s—can be reliably determined and verified. More recently, this idea has been reinforced by the concept that virginity can be “produced” or “restored” through genital surgery, thus maintaining the social conditions where virginity still functions as a form of moral currency.

The moral significance of virginity has traditionally been most visible in religious discourse and customs. Meanwhile, sociological and anthropological research has pointed out the strong persistence of sexual double standards between men and



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women, but also the rise of new understandings of virginity connected to digital spaces and innovative analytical frameworks. The humanities explore the cultural and symbolic systems through which virginity is created, as well as the artistic and social conventions through which it can act both as a tool of social control and a space for subversion, irony, or resistance. The symbolic patterns that have historically given virginity moral importance—patterns established in earlier times through traditional art forms—still influence today's perceptions. Virginity remains a powerful rhetorical device, with film and popular culture often balancing messages of “sexual liberalization” and the revival of puritanical ideals. In these contexts, virginity can be seen as a symbol of moral superiority, vulnerability, a commodity, or a stigma. Digital cultures also reshape notions of virginity: in some online communities, it becomes a core part of identity and emotion—associated with injury, exclusion, and envy—and is sometimes linked to misogyny and violent fantasies.

Against this backdrop, the conference is designed as an interdisciplinary forum that brings together researchers and practitioners from various fields within the social sciences and humanities, including, but not limited to, sociology, anthropology, history, art history and iconography, media and film studies, literary studies, philosophy (especially ethics and political philosophy), gender and sexuality studies, religious studies, and psychology.

Themes

Themes include, but are not limited to:

Virginity and the Body

Mythologies of the hymen; bodily integrity; corporeal signs of purity; medical, legal, and cultural constructions of virginity.

Virginity and Institutions in Historical and Contemporary Contexts

Family; religion; the state; law; education; institutional regulation of sexuality.

Virginity and Markets

Marriage; “honour”; the beauty industry; commodification; the social and economic value of virginity.

Virginity and Narratives

Literature; popular genres; “chaste plots”; life writing; narrative constructions of innocence, experience, and sexual knowledge.

Virginity and Visual Culture

Iconography; visual art; film; contemporary media; visual representations of purity, sanctity, and eroticism.

Virginity and Digital Culture

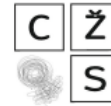
Platforms; online subcultures; radicalization; loneliness; digital intimacies; affective formations around virginity.

Virginity and (A)sexuality



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Asexuality; compulsory sexuality; heterosexual and queer virginity; definitions of “first sex”; non-normative sexualities and sexual temporalities.

Virginity and Sexual Pleasure

Sexual initiation and cultural scripts of the “first time”; pain, pleasure, and the mythologies of defloration; virginity, desire, shame, and erotic agency; gendered and queer configurations of pleasure; religious, moral, and cultural regulation of sexual pleasure; representations of virginity and pleasure in literature, film, and popular culture.

Submission Guidelines

Proposals should include the participant’s full name, institutional affiliation, position/title, email address, ORCID if applicable, a short biographical note of up to 100 words, the title of the proposed paper, five keywords, the selected thematic area, and an abstract of up to 500 words.

The abstract should outline the paper’s research focus and central argument, situating it within a relevant theoretical, conceptual, or disciplinary context. Where appropriate, it may also indicate the methodological approach or corpus and convey the broader stakes of the inquiry, including its contribution to current debates.

Individual presentations should not exceed 20 minutes and will be followed by discussion.

Submission form: [HERE](#)

Review and Selection Process

Proposals will be reviewed according to their relevance to the conference theme, clarity of argument, originality, and theoretical, methodological, historical, or interpretive contribution.

The organisers are committed to fostering an inclusive and respectful academic environment. Participants are invited to indicate any accessibility requirements in the submission form.

Publication

A selection of papers may be considered for publication in a peer-reviewed volume or journal issue. Further information will be provided after the conference.

Key Dates and Practical Information

Deadline for abstract submission: 1 November 2026

Notification of acceptance: 1 December 2026

Conference dates: 4-5 March 2027

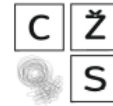
Conference language: English

Conference fee: EUR 100.00



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Web: www.ffri.uniri.hr



Payment instructions, including bank transfer details, will be sent to accepted participants together with the notification of acceptance.

Organising Committee

Jelena Androić, univ. spec. stud. eur.

Prof. Dr. Sanja Bojanić

Dr. Nadja Čekolj

Iva Davorija, PhD Candidate

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dubravka Dulibić-Paljar, Chair of the Organizing Committee

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Brigita Miloš

Prof. Dr. Marina Vicelja-Matijašić

Contact

For all enquiries, please contact: virgo@ffri.uniri.hr

Conference website: cza.uniri.hr