



# The Political Reception of the Classical Past in Norway and Beyond

Lecture by Assoc. Prof. [Ingvar Brandvik Mæhle](#) (Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion, UiB) and Prof. [Eivind Heldaas Seland](#) (Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion, UiB)



("In the sacrificial grove at the altar of party politics" Trade minister Johan Castberg, portrayed as a Roman priest, receives sacrifices carried by representatives of political parties and interest groups in connection with the proposal for new customs laws. Viking 30-1913. Photo: Uten opphavsrett/Public domain)

The lecture will take place on **Tuesday, 5 November 2024, at 7:00 p.m. (EST)** at the Norwegian Institute at Athens, Tsami Karatasou 5, 11742 (the lecture will also be streamed online via Zoom)

Registration is required for both in-person and virtual attendance.

To attend **in-person**, please register at [norwinst@uib.no](mailto:norwinst@uib.no)

To attend **via Zoom**, please register via the following link:

[https://uib.zoom.us/meeting/register/u5Atce6ppzorHNILrq5CiLLKE50\\_oI8baCo2](https://uib.zoom.us/meeting/register/u5Atce6ppzorHNILrq5CiLLKE50_oI8baCo2)



## Abstract

Antiquity, or the notions of the ancient Greco-Roman world, has played an important role in the history of Europe and Scandinavia, from the Middle Ages to the present day. The project “Use and reception of Classical history” investigates political, social, and religious aspects of the ancient heritage in Norway, Europe, and North America. The purpose is to understand better the many ways in which antiquity has been used throughout history. In this way, we may also better understand how the term antiquity is used today.

We find references to the period in constitutional debates, public discourse, and political experiments with "direct democracy". Antiquity has also become part of the legitimization base for far-right extremists and misogyny, both on social media and on the dark web. This has clear precursors in the position of antiquities myth in Nazi Germany. The idea of antiquity has thus been used for both constructive and destructive purposes, quite independently of what scholars have thought of ancient real history.

In this talk we address the field of reception studies and present selected work in progress from the project, including on the links and lack thereof of ties between ancient and modern democracies, as well as the use of classical antiquity in political discourse in early 20th century Norway.

## Biographical Note

**Ingvar Brandvik Mæhle** is Associate Professor in Ancient History at the Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural and Religious Studies, University of Bergen. His research focuses on social and political history in the ancient Greco-Roman World.

**Eivind Heldaas Seland** is professor of ancient and premodern global history at the Department of archaeology, history, cultural studies and religion, University of Bergen.