

Call for papers

Disabilities and Women in Ancient Rome: Legal, social and cultural perspectives

Workshop at the University of Helsinki, Finland

Monday, May 4, 2026

Deadline for submission: March 2, 2026

In recent years, there has been a significant growth in the fields of disability studies in the ancient world, with interdisciplinary approaches intersecting with gender studies, social history, legal history and material culture. These approaches allow a broad understanding of differences and responses to situations of vulnerability, based not only on individual experiences but also on social structures, cultural attitudes, and material conditions. Building on these perspectives, the workshop explores the intersection of gender and disabilities in ancient Rome, examining the situation of women with disabilities, their role as caregivers, and their position from social, juridical and economic standpoints. The aim of the workshop is to explore how Roman society addressed issues of care, protection and inclusion through its legal and cultural frameworks.

Topics of particular interest include (but not limited to):

- Legal and social frameworks:

Women with disabilities and their social and legal position

Legal frameworks for guardianship and protection of vulnerable persons

- Roles and autonomy:

Women physicians

Women as caregivers

- Cultural representations and material evidence:

Representations of women and disabilities in art, literature, and philosophy

Disability and gender in material culture (archaeological, anthropological and funerary evidence)

We invite researchers, PhD students, postdocs, and early-career researchers to submit proposals consisting of a one-page CV and a 300-word abstract. The proposals should be sent to: sofia.vierula@helsinki.fi

The keynote speaker will be Prof. Christian Laes (University of Manchester)

Workshop organizers

- Sofia Vierula (University of Helsinki): sofia.vierula@helsinki.fi
- Gaetana Balestra (University of Salento): gaetana.balestra@unisalento.it
- Kaius Tuori (University of Helsinki): kaius.tuori@helsinki.fi

Accepted proposals will be communicated on March 10, 2026. The organisers are unfortunately unable to assist in travel arrangements or accommodation or their costs.