History of Science 903 | 911
Globalizing the Scientific Revolution
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Spring 2019
3:30–5:25 pm W
5245 Mosse Humanities Building

Professor Florence Hsia
323 Bascom
office hours: 10:00 am–12:00 pm T & by appt.
262-1044 | florence.hsia@wisc.edu

COURSE SUMMARY

The seventeenth-century Scientific Revolution has long provided a foundational master narrative for the history of science, albeit one much challenged in recent literature. With its ostensibly revolutionary character under attack since the late 19th century, more recent critiques have focused on its assertion of European exceptionalism as well as its related emphases on scientific theories, great texts, and the mathematical and physical sciences, premises that gained particular resonance during the Cold War and with the emergence of modernization theory. This seminar seeks to provincialize and pluralize ‘the Scientific Revolution’ by taking up a number of recent conceptual and methodological proposals. What does it look like to adopt vantage points on early modern natural knowledge from Goa and Madrid as well as Paris and London, on board a ship sailing the trade winds across the Indian Ocean as well as from a quiet study in Oxford? Can we better integrate the global dimensions of scientific investigation into commercial and colonial ventures in this period? How might we go about widening our use of non-textual as well as textual evidence for early modern enquiries into the natural world? This course aims to develop your understanding of the Scientific Revolution as a canon of concepts and historical practice, as well as its major critiques and revisions from a global perspective in recent literature.

This seminar will be run in parallel at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Hebrew University of Jerusalem under the auspices of the George L. Mosse Program in History, and will feature seminar visits by Professors Raz Chen-Morris (HUJI) and Florence Hsia (UW-Madison). Secondary source readings will represent a range of disciplinary perspectives and the writing requirement for this seminar will be tailored to students’ particular needs in their respective programs of study.

The credit standard for this 3-credit course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course’s learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit or 9 hours per week). This includes regularly scheduled meeting times (group seminar meetings of 115 minutes per week), dedicated online time, reading, writing, field trips, individual consultations with the instructor, and other student work as described in the syllabus.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

(a) You’ll be asked to take turns leading discussion of assigned readings (how many will depend on the number of seminar participants). Please provide seminar participants with a set of questions/reactions/critiques (one page max) as a basis for discussion. Readings marked with asterisks are available through Canvas, the others through the library catalog.

(b) You should complete 15–20 pages of prose writing in connection with this course – ideally a research paper which relates to the themes of this course, analyses primary sources, and makes use of some conceptual and/or methodological insight gained through the readings. Such a paper may involve comparison of early modern materials with materials from your own period of interest. Other possibilities include a critical discussion of some historiographical issue in the secondary literature; two or more book reviews (situating the book with respect to existing scholarship and critiquing the author’s use of source material); or a bibliographic survey in preparation for a prelim field. Please talk with me as early as you can in the semester to discuss how you propose to fulfill the writing requirement.

(c) A preliminary prospectus and bibliography are due to the seminar on Apr 3. Please identify a primary or secondary source related to your research to share with the class in advance of your prospectus & bibliography presentation.

(d) You’ll present your research-in-progress to the seminar on Apr 10, Apr 17, or Apr 24.

(e) You’ll present a lightning talk on your research-in-progress on May 1. This will be coordinated with seminar participants in Madison and Jerusalem.

(f) Grading will be based on class participation (~25%), in-class presentations (~25%), and your written work (~50%). All of your written work is due on Wednesday, May 8 at 5:00 pm.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

Jan 23  Introductions

Jan 30  Canons & centers

Feb 6  Cultures


Feb 13  **Knowledge in motion**


*Cagle, Hugh. Assembling the tropics: science and medicine in Portugal’s empire, 1450-1700. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018, chap. 4 (104–32).*

Feb 20  **Networks**


Feb 27  **Workshop: Special Collections (984 Memorial Library)**

Mar 6  **Workshop: Special Collections (984 Memorial Library)**

Mar 13  **Objects & agents**


Mar 20 **Spring break** (no class meeting)

Mar 27 **Globalizing?**

Apr 3 **Prospectus & bibliography due**

Apr 10 **Peer presentations**

Apr 17 **Peer presentations**

Apr 24 **Peer presentations**

May 1 **Lightning talks**

May 8 **Final written work due at 5:00 pm**