

# Seminars

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## Departmental Seminars

Seminars are held on **Thursdays from 3.30 to 5pm in Seminar Room 2**, Department of History and Philosophy of Science, Free School Lane, Cambridge. There is tea beforehand from 3pm in Seminar Room 1.

Organised by Richard Staley and Marta Halina.

- 23 April **Greg Radick (University of Leeds)**  
Mendel the fraud? A social history of truth in genetics
- 30 April **Simon Naylor (University of Glasgow)**  
Log books and the law of storms: maritime meteorology and the British Admiralty in the 19th century
- 7 May **Angela Breitenbach (Faculty of Philosophy, Cambridge)**  
The lawfulness of the contingent
- 14 May **Warwick Anderson (University of Sydney)**  
Filming Fore, shooting scientists: medical research and documentary film
- 21 May ***Twentieth Annual Hans Rausing Lecture***  
*McCrum Lecture Theatre, Bene't Street, 4.30pm*  
**Jianjun Mei (Needham Research Institute, Cambridge)**  
Metallurgy and Chinese civilisation: an historical overview

# Abstracts

23 April **Greg Radick (University of Leeds)**

Mendel the fraud? A social history of truth in genetics

Two things about Gregor Mendel are common knowledge: first, that he was the ‘monk in the garden’ whose experiments with peas in mid-19th-century Moravia became the starting point for genetics; second, that, despite that exalted status, there is something fishy, maybe even fraudulent, about the data that Mendel reported. In the year marking the 150th anniversary of Mendel’s lectures on his experiments, this talk will explore the cultural politics of this accusation of fraudulence against Mendel. Although the notion that Mendel’s numbers were, in statistical terms, too good to be true was well understood almost immediately after the famous ‘rediscovery’ of his work in 1900, the problem became widely discussed and agonized over only from the 1960s, for reasons having as much to do with Cold War geopolitics as with traditional concerns about the objectivity of science. Appreciating the Cold War origins of the problem as we have inherited it can be a helpful step towards shifting the discussion in more productive directions, for scientific as well as history-of-science purposes.

30 April **Simon Naylor (University of Glasgow)**

Log books and the law of storms: maritime meteorology and the British Admiralty in the 19th century

This paper contributes to debates about the relationship between science and the military by examining the British Admiralty’s participation in meteorological projects in the first half of the 19th century. It focuses on attempts to transform Royal Naval log books into standardized meteorological registers that would be of use to both science and the state. The paper begins with a discussion of Admiralty Hydrographer, Francis Beaufort, who promoted the use of standardized systems for the observation of the weather at sea. It then examines the application of ships’ logs to the science of storms. The paper focuses on the Army Engineer, William Reid, who studied hurricanes while stationed in Barbados and Bermuda. Reid was instrumental in persuading the Admiralty to implement a naval meteorological policy, something the Admiralty Hydrographer had struggled to achieve. The paper uses the reception and adoption of work on storms at sea to reflect on the means and ends of maritime meteorology in the mid-19th century.

7 May **Angela Breitenbach (Faculty of Philosophy, Cambridge)**

The lawfulness of the contingent

Kant argues that all empirical phenomena are unified by natural laws. Any appearance of lawlessness in nature is only the result of our ignorance, and this is true whether we consider the inanimate or animate world. Kant also holds that there is an important difference between the physical and biological sciences. He famously claims that the progress made in physics by Newton’s laws of motion could never be achieved in biology, and that the study of living nature must instead be guided by a regulative principle of purposive organisation, indicating the ‘lawfulness of the contingent’. My aim in this paper is to explore whether and how one might resolve the tension between Kant’s claims to the unity of nature and the disunity of the special sciences. I propose that what emerges from Kant’s account is a non-reductionist conception of scientific unity that is essentially dependent on a unifying perspective.

14 May **Warwick Anderson (University of Sydney)**

Filming Fore, shooting scientists: medical research and documentary film

During the Cold War, the research film became instrumental in medical science and cultural anthropology, especially in the surveillance and analysis of non-recurring events in isolated or primitive communities. Inspired by the informational cinema studies of Mead and Bateson on Bali and Gesell in New Haven, Gajdusek and Sorenson in the 1960s sought to accumulate a global film archive of primitive communities, focusing on clinical disorders, such as kuru among the Fore people of New Guinea, and patterns of child health and development. Ostensibly objective, the camera was for them a desiring machine, thus relating their archival project to the contemporary experimental film of Warhol and others in New York. Research film should be distinguished from formal documentary film, which flourished in this period, with its emphasis on editorial selection, thematic coherence, and narrative closure. Ironically, and somewhat disappointingly, Gajdusek's and Sorensen's research film archive is now used mostly to provide ornamentation and verisimilitude to 21st-century documentary films about the supposed heroics or presumed priapism of modern scientists.

21 May ***Twentieth Annual Hans Rausing Lecture***

*McCrum Lecture Theatre, Bene't Street, 4.30pm*

**Jianjun Mei (Needham Research Institute, Cambridge)**

Metallurgy and Chinese civilisation: an historical overview

The significant contributions of the Chinese people to the development of world civilisation have been well documented in Joseph Needham's monumental *Science and Civilisation in China* series. Over the past two decades, new archaeological discoveries and research have revealed an increasing body of evidence showing that Chinese civilisation did not develop in isolation, but was the result of complex historical processes involving longstanding and extensive cultural and technological interactions with other civilisations. Taking bronze casting, cast iron and *paktong* (white copper) as typical examples, this lecture offers a historical overview of the role of metallurgical technologies in shaping the growth of ancient Chinese civilisation. It argues from a technological perspective that the interaction between China and the outside world has always been a crucial factor in stimulating the vigorous development of Chinese civilization since its very beginnings. The importance of technological 'institutionalization' in a given social context will also be emphasised.

# Cabinet of Natural History

This research seminar is concerned with all aspects of the history of natural history and the field and environmental sciences.

Seminars are held on **Mondays at 1pm in Seminar Room 1**. You are welcome to bring your lunch with you. Organised by Margaret Carlyle.

- 27 April **Kathryn Schoefert (HPS, Cambridge)**  
Beavers, brains, behaviour: the natural histories of 1950s psychiatry
- 11 May **José Beltrán (European University Institute, Florence)**  
The hand of the naturalist: Charles Plumier, images and overseas natural history in late-17th-century France
- 18 May **Melanie Keene (HPS, Cambridge)**  
The elephant in the room: presence, practice and pachyderms in Victorian education  
*Field trip – Friday 22 May*
- 8 June **Victor Boantza (University of Minnesota)**  
Natural history, chemistry and the mysteries of vegetation in the 18th century  
*Garden party – Friday 12 June*

# Twentieth Century Think Tank

Think Tank meetings are held on **Thursdays, 1–2pm in Seminar Room 2**. All welcome! Organised by Richard Staley, Jesse Olszynko-Gryn and Helen Curry.

- 30 April **Dmitriy Myelnikov (HPS, Cambridge)**  
Bypassing the brave new world: reporting transgenic mice in the early 1980s
- 14 May **Warwick Anderson (University of Sydney)**  
Intolerant bodies: on biological individuality and writing with scientists

# Nature and Culture Seminar Series

Seminars take place on **Tuesdays, 1–2.30pm in Seminar Room 1**. Please direct any queries to Beth Hannon.

- 28 April **Gillian Brown (University of St Andrews)**  
Evolutionary perspectives on sex differences in human behaviour
- 5 May **Heidi Colleran (Institute for Advanced Study in Toulouse)**  
The cultural evolution of fertility decline
- 12 May **Fiona Jordan (University of Bristol)**  
The bounded diversity of human kinship: unpacking processes of cultural evolution
- 19 May **Kevin Laland (University of St Andrews)**  
The evolution of culture

# Seminars at CRASSH

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## Global Science

Seminars are held on **alternate Tuesdays, 12.00–2.00pm in Room SG1, Alison Richard Building, West Road**. Organised by James Poskett, James Hall, Megan Barford and others.

Website: [www.crassh.cam.ac.uk/programmes/global-science](http://www.crassh.cam.ac.uk/programmes/global-science)

21 April TBC

5 May **Sophie Brockmann (Institute of Latin American Studies, London)**  
Global aspirations and local traditions: discourses of science, technology and progress in Central America, 1790–1840

19 May **Christos Lynteris (CRASSH, Cambridge)**  
The visual plague: global perspectives

2 June **Amy Donovan (Geography, Cambridge)**  
Respondent: **Marta Magalhães (Social Anthropology, Cambridge)**  
Volcanoes on borders: managing liminal science in Latin America

## Things that Matter, 1400–1900

Seminars are held on **alternate Wednesdays, 12.00–2.00pm in Room SG1, Alison Richard Building, West Road**. Organised by Margaret Carlyle and others.

Website: [www.crassh.cam.ac.uk/programmes/things](http://www.crassh.cam.ac.uk/programmes/things)

22 April **Timothy Wilson (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford)**  
**Sarah Haggarty (English, Cambridge)**  
Gifted things

6 May **Anne Secord (Darwin Correspondence Project, Cambridge)**  
**Lucy Razzall (English, Cambridge)**  
Contained things

20 May **Helen King (Open University)**  
**Michelle O'Malley (University of Sussex)**  
Reproduced things

3 June **Will Fisher (City University of New York)**  
**Jen Evans (University of Hertfordshire)**  
Sexy things

# Graduate workshops and seminars

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## HPS History Workshop

Need help writing a tricky part of your argument? Need some fresh ideas and references? Or simply want to see how your early-career colleagues approach the writing process? The History Workshop is an informal setting to discuss our written works-in-progress on any area of the history of science, technology and medicine, and share feedback. A draft PhD chapter, article or conference paper will be circulated by email before each meeting. We'll then discuss it together over tea and biscuits at **5pm on alternate Wednesdays in Seminar Room 1**.

Contact Andreas Sommer and/or Seb Falk if you are interested in sharing your work in this forum, or would like to be added to the mailing list.

- 29 April **Seb Falk (HPS, Cambridge)**  
Pedagogy and the vernacular in medieval astronomy
- 13 May **Jonnie Penn (HPS, Cambridge)**  
John von Neumann, Alan Turing and the origins of cellular automata
- 27 May **Jenny Bulstrode (HPS, Cambridge)**  
Rock, paper, patents: between intellectual property and embodied knowledge
- 10 June **Brandon Jackson (HPS, Cambridge)**  
Tuning out knowledge: radio interface design in interwar Britain

# Reading and discussion groups

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## Coffee with Scientists

The aim of this group is to explore and enhance the interface between HPS and science. Many of us in HPS already have close engagements with science and scientists, but we do not often pull together our activities in those directions. We could benefit from more explicit discussions about the relationship between HPS and the sciences themselves, and from encouraging HPS-scholars and scientists to help each other's work. Many of our graduate students and postdocs currently work in isolation from scientists; they may benefit from the stimulation of interactions with colleagues and mentors from various science departments (in Cambridge and elsewhere), difficult to induce in our regular seminars and reading groups, which tend to be infused with standard HPS expectations, assumptions and customs.

During Easter Term 2015 we will meet on **Fridays, 3.30–5.00pm in Seminar Room 2**. Listed below are the meetings confirmed so far, and one further event may be organised. Further information and reading materials will be distributed through the email list of the group; please contact Hasok Chang if you would like to be included on the list.

24 April **John Hall**: Reflections on clinical psychology: science, practice and policy

1 May **Eric Steig**: Is paleoclimatology science?

22 May **Klaus Ruthenberg**: Closed theories and chemistry

## Philosophy and History of Physics Reading Group

Organised by Daniel Mitchell, Hasok Chang and Jeremy Butterfield.

This year's meetings have one common theme: measurement. We investigate the development of measurements in various sciences in recent centuries, paying attention to their epistemological significance, their institutional and social settings, and their relation to measurements in other sciences. The year's activities will culminate in an international interdisciplinary conference on 'The Making of Measurement' held at CRASSH on 23–24 July 2015, organised by Daniel Mitchell, Eran Tal and Hasok Chang.

The group will meet weekly at **4.00–5.00pm on Tuesdays in the Board Room** (please note later time). Scholars whose works we will discuss this term include Anna Alexandrova, Jim Grozier, Klaus Ruthenberg, Michael Kershaw and Annette Mülberger, covering the social and psychological sciences as well as the physical sciences. Further information and reading materials will be distributed through the email list of the group; please contact Daniel Mitchell if you would like to be included on the list.

## AD HOC

During the Easter Term AD HOC will have occasional meetings on **Mondays, 5.00–6.30pm in Seminar Room 1**. Further details will be announced as they are confirmed. For students and junior scholars who wish to travel to the meetings from outside Cambridge, small travel subsidies are available thanks to a grant from the Society for the History of Alchemy and Chemistry (SHAC). Similar subsidies are also available for those wishing to attend meetings of the London branch of the group.

Organised by Hasok Chang and Sophie Osiecki. To get on the email list for AD HOC, please send a note to [adhochistory@gmail.com](mailto:adhochistory@gmail.com).

# History and Theory Reading Group

## Benjamin's *Arcades Project*

This term the History and Theory Reading Group will tackle the brilliant, monumental *Arcades Project* – Walter Benjamin's unfinished attempt to grapple with the development of modern capitalism through an exploration of Parisian commercial architecture at the end of the 19th century.

**Owing to the sheer scale of the *Arcades*, our procedure is to set a small amount of required reading for each session, and to encourage participants to work through the text itself in their own manner, identifying relevant passages and bringing them to the reading group for discussion.**

The full text of the *Arcades* is available online (though you are advised to get hold of one of the many print copies available in Cambridge's libraries/bookshops!). The essay at the *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* serves as a useful introduction to Benjamin's thought, and provides a good bibliography, especially of more recent work. Links to all the readings are available at [www.hps.cam.ac.uk/seminars](http://www.hps.cam.ac.uk/seminars).

Meetings take place **every other Friday, 11am–12.30pm in the Board Room**. Organised by Boris Jardine and Matthew Drage.

- 24 April Susan Buck-Morss, 'Benjamin's Passagen-Werk: Redeeming Mass Culture for the Revolution', *New German Critique* 29 (Spring–Summer, 1983), pp. 211–240
- 8 May Richard Sieburth, 'Benjamin the Scrivener', *Assemblage* 6 (June, 1988), pp. 6–23
- 22 May Jürgen Habermas, 'Consciousness-Raising or Redemptive Criticism: The Contemporaneity of Walter Benjamin', *New German Critique* 17 (Spring, 1979), pp. 30–59
- 5 June Walter Benjamin, 'Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia'  
Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History'

# Philosophy of Psychology Reading Group

## Misbelief

We meet on **Thursdays, 11am–12noon in Seminar Room 1**. Organised by Riana Betzler.

- 23 April McKay, R.T. & Dennett, D.C. (2009). The evolution of misbelief. *Behavioural and Brain Sciences*, 32, 493–561. Article (pp. 493–510) + two commentaries of your choice!
- 30 April Davies, A.M.A. & Davies, M. (2009). Explaining Pathologies of Belief. In M. Broome & L. Bortolotti, eds., *Psychiatry as Cognitive Neuroscience: Philosophical Perspectives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 285–324.
- 7 May Fletcher, P.C. & Frith, C.D. (2009). Perceiving is believing: a Bayesian approach to explaining the positive symptoms of schizophrenia. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 10, pp. 48–58.
- 14 May Murphy, D. (2012). The Folk Epistemology of Delusions. *Neuroethics*, 5(1), pp. 19–22.

# Language groups

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## German Therapy

German Therapy meets **every Thursday during term time in Room P19 from 10–11.30am** to discuss German texts from the history and philosophy of science, be that sources or literature.

We are an informal group of beginners and advanced learners of German – all levels welcome. Feel free to bring texts you are struggling with. For more information or to be added to the mailing list, please email Susanne Schmidt.

## Latin Therapy

Latin Therapy is an informal reading group. All levels of Latin (including beginners) are very welcome. We meet on **Fridays, 4.00–5.30pm in the Board Room**, to translate and discuss a text from the history of science, technology or medicine. If a primary source is giving you grief, we'd love to help you make sense of it over tea and biscuits! Thus we provide a free translation service for the Department, and a means for members to brush up their skills.

More information can be found at our website: [www.hps.cam.ac.uk/latintherapy](http://www.hps.cam.ac.uk/latintherapy). To be added to the mailing list, or to suggest a text, please contact Tillmann Taape or Natalie Lawrence.

## Arabic Therapy

The Arabic Therapy group meets **every Tuesday, from 3.00 to 4.30pm in Room P19**.

We are an informal group for beginners and more experienced learners who want to improve their Arabic language. Each week we spend a little time discussing some light grammar, before reading through a text together. For more information, or to be added to the mailing list, please contact Seb Falk.

## Greek Therapy

Greek Therapy meets **every Wednesday during term time in the Board Room from 5.30 to 7pm**.

We are an informal group for beginners and for experienced readers of Greek seeking to brush up their skills – all levels are welcome. Sessions usually involve a basic grammar session at the beginning followed by reading through a more advanced text. For more information or to be added to the mailing list, please email Liz Smith.