

CULTURAL ASTRONOMIES



IN MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN EUROPE

SUMMER INTERNATIONAL COURSE

17–21 JULY 2023

HYBRID: on-line and on-site in Warsaw

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SUMMER INTERNATIONAL COURSE: CULTURAL ASTRONOMIES IN MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN EUROPE

An overview of the topic since its emergence
with a discussion of its definition and implications

1. GENERAL DATA

Organization: Polish Academy of Sciences (Warsaw) in association with the Centro Interuniversitário de História das Ciências e da Tecnologia (Lisbon) and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (Lampeter), intended for postgraduate students, university faculty, researchers, and independent scholars.

Sponsored by *PERIPHERIES–Minority Cultures on the Periphery of Science: The Jews and the Circulation of Scientific Goods* (funded by the European Union Horizon 2020 under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. 847639).

Date: July, Monday 17–Friday 21, 2023 (6h/day).

Language of instruction: English

Hybrid format: classes will run online ([Zoom](#)) and allow virtual attendance of everybody and on-site attendance of those professors and students in Warsaw. Sessions will not be recorded, so synchronous attendance is required.

Location: L. & A. Birkenmajer Institute for the History of Science, Polish Academy of Sciences, ul. Nowy Świat 72, 1st floor (room A27), 00-330 Warszawa, Poland.

Course schedule: the course consists of 30 instruction units (45 minutes each) distributed in 15 sessions (one in the morning and two in the afternoon each day).

Q&A will follow each unit for about 15 minutes.

Optional: Ph.D. students may ask for an assessment in order to be able to obtain 3 ECTS credits recognized by the [Anthropos Doctoral School](#) (an interdisciplinary doctoral program offered jointly by nine institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences).

For questions regarding the assessment and related ECTS credits, email Dr. Olga Linkiewicz (szkola.anthropos@ihpan.edu.pl).

Addressed to

Graduate students, university faculty, researchers, and all those interested in the History of Astronomy and the cultural aspects of its study and practice in Europe and the Mediterranean during the medieval and early modern periods.

Registration Deadline: 20 June 2023

Contact: rodriguezarribas@gmail.com

There is no registration fee, but prior registration is needed.

Academic director

Dr. Josefina Rodríguez-Arribas

([L. & A. Birkenmajer Institute for the History of Science, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw](#))

Organizing Committee

Prof. Nicholas Campion

([University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Lampeter](#))

Prof. Henrique Leitão

([Centro Interuniversitário de História das Ciências e da Tecnologia, Lisbon](#))



2. COURSE DESCRIPTION

Under the motto that the cultures of the different peoples reflect in their skies, the course will address the emerging subject area of Cultural Astronomy or Astronomy in Culture (or History of Astronomy in Culture). This is a scholarly field either underrated or hidden by the fields of the History of Astronomy, Archaeo-astronomy, and Ethno-astronomy—the two latter so widespread that they have become synonymous with Cultural Astronomy (too frequently reduced to indigenous and/or pre-historical practices). Cultural astronomy focuses on how astronomical knowledge and belief influence human behaviour and social structures. The inherent interdisciplinarity (astronomy, religion, anthropology, art, architecture, medicine, literature, etc.) of any of the possible approaches to Cultural Astronomy is a challenge to the regrettable but well-established separation of the scientific and humanistic disciplines. This makes Cultural Astronomy an even more desirable and necessary borderland to explore and understand. The course will discuss the concepts of Cultural Astronomy and the manifestations and uses of astronomical knowledge in historical cultures. The discussion will consider the most common problems in the History of Astronomy but with a focus on the meaning and scope of the long, rich, and complex relationship between astronomy and culture.

With very few exceptions, most publications, syllabi, and conferences of Cultural Astronomy focus on non-European and ancient cultures, resulting in the field being very neglected regarding Europe and specific historical periods, namely, the Middle Ages and the Early-Modern Period. Is there nothing indigenous or anthropological in the individuals and groups that practiced and used astronomy in medieval and early modern Europe? Additional limitations and misunderstandings come to the study of Cultural Astronomy in Europe from two approaches: the fragmentation of the field in isolated case studies and the often reduction of Cultural Astronomy to astrology.

The course will address these gaps and limitations from different methodologies by focusing on Medieval and Early Modern Europe and its cultural forms of understanding, theorizing, and practicing astronomy between the 13th and 17th centuries.

We will explore what 'cultural' means in the astronomy practiced by astronomers in Europe during these periods. We will reflect on and discuss critical research questions about the subject of cultures and astronomy. For instance:

- a) What aspects of astronomical knowledge and practice can be considered cultural.
- b) Whether there is an overlap between the fields of the History of Astronomy and Cultural Astronomy.
- c) Why the History of Astronomy is more well-represented than Cultural Astronomy in current research and publications.
- d) How astronomy relates to society and aspects of culture such as the arts, religion, literature, and the built environment.
- e) How the study of astronomy and culture helps us understand the History of Astronomy and the history and nature of science.

We are interested in exploring all forms of Cultural Astronomy in Europe: astrological, religious, kabbalistic, political, philosophical, heretic, etc.

By the end of this course, students will be familiar with an exciting new and genuinely interdisciplinary field. They will be able to identify and describe different manifestations of Cultural Astronomy in Europe between the 13th and 17th centuries and detect the various forms in which astronomical practice, knowledge, and beliefs relates to the attitudes and values of a period and area.

Subject Fields

Cultural Astronomy / History of Astronomy / History of Astrology / History of Medicine / History of Art / Medieval and Early-modern Literatures / European History / Byzantine Studies / Jewish Studies / Latin Studies/ Vernacular Languages and Literatures / Intellectual History / Cultural Studies / Visual Studies / Material Culture / History of Book

3. COURSE LECTURERS (in alphabetical order)

Dr. Alberto Bardi

(Department of the History of Science, Tsinghua University)

Dr. Barbara Bienias

(L. & A. Birkenmajer Institute for the History of Science, Polish Academy of Sciences)

Prof. Nicholas Campion

(University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Lampeter)

Prof. Anne-Laurence Caudano

(Department of History, University of Winnipeg)

Dr. Seb Falk

(Independent scholar, historian, and broadcaster)

Dr. Maciej Jasiński

(L. & A. Birkenmajer Institute for the History of Science, Polish Academy of Sciences)

Prof. Stephen Johnston

(History of Science Museum, University of Oxford)

Prof. Sylwia Konarska-Zimnicka

(Institute of History, Jan Kochanowski University)

Prof. Richard Kremer

(Emeritus, Department of History, Dartmouth College)

Prof. Tzvi Langermann

(Emeritus, Bar Ilan University)

Dr. Tayra Lanuza

(Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage, Ca' Foscari University of Venice)

Prof. Reimund Leicht

(Department of Jewish Thought, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Prof. Henrique Leitão

(Centro Interuniversitário de História das Ciências e da Tecnologia, University of Lisbon)

Prof. Sacha Stern

(Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies, University College of London)

Dr. Ilana Wartenberg

(The Lester and Sally Entin Faculty of Humanities, Tel Aviv University)

4. PROGRAM

(15 sessions, each session = 45'+ 45' plus 15' final questions & answers)
The schedule is according to Central Europe Summertime (UTC+2)

Monday, 17 July 2023

- 9:15-9:30am Preliminary remarks: Josefina Rodríguez-Arribas
9:30-11:30am **Session 1:** Nicholas Champion. *Some Reflection on What Cultural Astronomy is*
12:30-2:30pm **Session 2:** Alberto Bardi. *Cultural Astronomy in Byzantium and its Aftermath*
4-6pm **Session 3:** Anne-Laurence Caudano. *The Place and Nature of Astronomy in Late and Post-Byzantine Culture and Society*

Tuesday, 18 July 2023

- 9:30-11:30am **Session 4:** Tzvi Langermann. *Jewish Cultural Astronomy*
12:30-2:30pm **Session 5:** Sacha Stern. *The Science of Jewish Calendar Computation, Astronomy, and the Medieval Jewish-Christian Encounter*
4-6pm **Session 6:** Ilana Wartenberg. *Mediating Astronomy from the Elite to the Popular Cultural Jewish Spheres in the Middle Ages*

Wednesday, 19 July 2023

- 9:30-11:30am **Session 7:** Maciej Jasiński. *Astronomy and Culture in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*
12:30-2:30pm **Session 8:** Sylwia Konarska-Zimnicka. *The Astrological School at Krakow University*
4-6pm **Session 9:** Richard L. Kremer. *Public Astrology in Fifteenth-Sixteenth-Century Europe*

Thursday, 20 July 2023

- 9:30-11:30am **Session 10:** Stephen Johnston. *Astronomy as Material Culture: Representing, Using and Making the Sphere and Astrolabe*
12:30-2:30pm **Session 11:** Seb Falk. *Astronomies and Books in Late-Medieval Europe*
4-6pm **Session 12:** Reimund Leicht. *Astronomy in the Medieval Jewish Study Programs of Sciences*

Friday, 21 July 2023

- 9:30-11:30am **Session 13:** Barbara Bienias. *Astronomy in Culture and Astronomy as Culture in Elizabethan and Early Jacobean England*
12:30-2:30pm **Session 14:** Tayra Lanuza. *Cultural Astronomy in Early-Modern Spain*
4-6pm **Session 15:** Henrique Leitão. *Cultural Astronomy in Early-Modern Portugal*



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John Mandeville, Illustrations for Mandeville's Travels, British Library Ms 24189.

Astrological drawing (Moon and Zodiac constellations). British Library Ms Egerton 845.



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