HIS1200 – HIS1200 – Eldre historie fram til ca. 1800

The Scientific Revolution: A contested concept

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The Scientific Revolution is said to have taken place in the 16th and 17th centuries. It is associated with the "discovery" of a heliocentric universe and an understanding of the laws of gravity, but also relates to the invention of the telescope, the microscope, the air pump, and the decimal system—to name just a few. What is more, we often consider the Scientific Revolution to have provided a kind of blueprint for how natural science is to be done, thus paving the way for a modern and materialistic understanding of the natural world.

Yet "the scientific revolution" is a heavily contested notion, which has been challenged and redefined ever since its inception. In this course, we will analyse how our concept of a scientific revolution came about, and how it has been shaped according to the prevailing historiographical currents. Particular attention will be paid to the importance of instruments, books, colonialism, as well as the relationship between science and religion. Since the course is primarily concerned with shifting historiographical contexts over the past eighty years, and less with technical details, it is valuable for anyone interested in intellectual and cultural history, not just for students interested in early modern history of science.

Aims
In this course, students will:
1. learn how to think critically, creatively, and systematically.
2. gain insight into the fragility of historical concepts.
3. train argumentative writing skills.
4. get acquainted with a variety of historical source material

Outcomes
After successfully completing this course students should:
1. Have a basic knowledge of key developments in "the scientific revolution"
2. Understanding the major methodological shifts in history over the past eighty years.
3. Be able to devise and write a short argumentative text.