

**CULTURE, SCIENCE, AND RELIGION
(MIDDLE AGES TO THE PRESENT)**

LECTURE SERIES

Monday, January 23, 2012
6:00 pm
Room TBA

Paul F. Grendler

Professor of History Emeritus at the University of Toronto.

The Italian Renaissance University (1400-1600)

Italian Renaissance universities led Europe in the study of medicine, law, and the humanities. They attracted students from all over Europe. How did they function? Why were they so successful?

Monday, February 13, 2012
6:00 pm
Room TBA

Guy Consolmagno

Research astronomer and planetary scientist at the Vatican Observatory

Galileo in His Time

Science is always shaped by what is happening in the broader society that supports it, and the science of the 17th century was no different. Speaking as a Jesuit scientist, Dr. Consolmagno examines how Galileo's work challenged the science of the day, how it was shaped by the personal ambitions of the main players in the field of natural philosophy at that time, and how Galileo's standing rose and fell with the fortunes of the Spanish during the Thirty Years War.

Wednesday, March 7,
7:30 pm
Room TBA

Marco Bersanelli

Professor of Astronomy and Astrophysics and Director of the Ph.D. School in Physics, Astrophysics and Applied Physics at the University of Milan, Italy.

*At the Origin of the Universe.
What does science tell us about the origin of the Universe?
What this knowledge suggests about its meaning?*

All ancient civilizations wondered about the nature of celestial objects and developed mythological accounts for the origin of an ordered cosmos from a primordial substance (water, chaos, etc.). The Judo-Christian tradition introduced an entirely new concept of creation, by which the universe (all that is, every creature, space and time) emerges from nothingness by the free act of a loving and rational God. Modern science has developed a remarkably faithful description of the physical processes responsible for the formation of the basic structures in the universe, from planetary to cosmic scales. While several issues are still open and pose serious challenges, we can describe in coherent physical terms the main stages of cosmic evolution. Initially the universe was characterized by a state of extreme simplicity, with high temperature and density, with slight density perturbations which acted as gravitational seeds for structure formation. The combination of cosmic expansion and a variety of physical processes acting at local scales produced a series of transitions to increasingly complex systems. Cosmological observations now underway are producing a snapshot of the early universe with unprecedented detail, shedding new light on the physics at work some 14 billion years ago, just a tiny fraction of a second after the big bang. Thus scientific cosmology has superseded the mythological accounts of ancient cultures, by providing a rational description of the origin of structures through the wonderful fabric of natural laws. On the other hand, modern science leaves untouched the big question of creation: What is the ultimate source of all that is? Why reality (including space-time), instead of non-reality? Furthermore, modern cosmology arouses new fundamental questions: Why is the universe suitable for life and consciousness? What is the nature of physical laws driving cosmic evolution? What makes our understanding of the universe possible?

Wednesday, March 28, 2012
2:40 pm
Room TBA

Gabriella Zarri

Professor of History, University of Florence, Italy

Women and Religion in Early Modern Europe

Wednesday, April 11, 2012, 7:30 pm
Room TBA

Giovanni Maddalena

Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Molise, Italy
Scientific director of the “Life and Fate International Study Center”

Life and Faith: the Novel of the Freedom

Life and Fate was Vasily Grossman’s (1905-1964) masterpiece, the work of one of the most important and most ignored writers of the 20th century.

The theme of the novel is the absolute irreducibility of the individual man by any form of power. It is in the battle of Stalingrad that Grossman discovered this truest face of man, defined by one’s own freedom above all. He caught glimpses of this hidden face in all the actions of men, and he was the first to suffer in name of this freedom: the manuscript of the novel was confiscated by the KGB in 1961 and Grossman died without seeing its publication, which came about first in the West, twenty years later.

Thursday, April 26
1:00 pm
Room TBA

Rachel Fulton Brown

Associate Professor of History, University of Chicago

Ave, Maria: Naming the Virgin in the High Middle Ages

For information please contact Brenda Washington
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