Institut für Philosophie, Literatur-,
Wissenschafts- und Technikgeschichte

Technische Universität Berlin

FORSCHUNGSKOLLOQUIUM ZUR WISSENSCHAFTSGESCHICHTE

Prof. Dr. Friedrich Steinle

Cesare Pastorino

(TU Berlin)

The Weight of Things: Quantification of Matter and the Exchange of Technical and Learned Knowledge in Early Modern Europe

This talk will describe my DFG-funded project "The Weight of Things." This research investigates the quantification of matter in the early modern period, focusing on the concept of specific gravity. At a given volume, different substances can be identified by their weight, or specific gravity. Surprisingly, during the sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century, this notion came to be crucial for a heterogeneous group of early modern experts, including instrument makers, alchemists, antiquarians, humanists and biblical scholars. My project will provide the first full investigation of this rich cultural and technical environment and consider the contexts in which these experts used specific gravities and the knowledge transfer among them. In this talk I will especially focus on the case of the celebrated German astronomer and mathematician Johannes Kepler. Kepler's analysis of specific gravities suggests the existence of an overlooked early modern experimental tradition, at the intersection between the history of science and the history of the humanities.

Dr. Cesare Pastorino is a Research Fellow at Technische Universität Berlin. He works on the origins and development of early modern experimentation (broadly conceived) with an interdisciplinary approach. In the past, among other positions, he has been a senior research fellow at the Vossius Center for History of Humanities and Sciences (University of Amsterdam), a postdoctoral fellow at Technische Universität Berlin and the Berlin Center for the History of Knowledge, and a fellow at the Chemical Heritage Foundation in Philadelphia. He also worked for several years in two digital history projects: The Chymistry of Isaac Newton and The Newton Project.

Montag, 23. Oktober 2017
16 Uhr c.t.
Raum H 3013

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