

PROGRAM 2019

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 6TH

2PM

Simone Turchetti
(CHSTM, Manchester) "Changing Channel: What is Science Diplomacy and How Could It Help Us to Better Understand Cold War Science?"

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10TH

4PM

Jon Agar
(UCL, London) "Margaret Thatcher, the Cold War, and International Science in the 1980s."

VENUE:

MAIN CONFERENCE HALL

Max Planck Institute for the History of Science
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ORGANISERS

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SCAN ME!



For more information about the event series,
please visit the mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de website.



UN Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm, Sweden, June 1972.



MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE
FOR THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE

COLD WAR SEMINAR SERIES

Science, Technology, and Diplomacy During the Cold War and Beyond:

Frameworks, Perspectives, and Challenges



Dorothy Hodgkin and Moisey Markov in conversation, Pugwash Conference, 1983.

ABSTRACT

Rationale

This new seminar series aims to provide a forum that takes account of exciting developments within recent scholarship on science during the Cold War—especially, but not limited to, the approaches of transnational and global history.

Scope and framework of the project

History of science during the Cold War is a well-established field which has been characterized by certain basic patterns and assumptions, most prominently a picture of a bipolar world dominated by the ideological, political, economic and military rivalry between the superpowers. This research agenda has yielded rich insights and a central thesis about the “militarization of science” and science in the service of the national security state. However, the literature tended to emphasize state actors, especially the superpowers and the countries within their respective alliance systems in Eastern and Western Europe, view the bloc divide as impermeable and for a long time largely overlooked the countries of the Global South.

Recently, historians of science have started to move beyond this framework, taking their cue in part from developments within wider scholarship on the Cold War, notably the application of the analytical approaches of transnational and global history. This has engendered a shift to a multipolar model of the conflict now reconceived as a global transformation “fuelled and shaped, but not determined by the superpower rivalry,” characterized by exchanges/flows of knowledge, ideas, techniques, objects and people across national borders and geopolitical divides, and in which importance is accorded to non-state actors. As Arne Westad has noted, “The Cold War is not what it once was.”

Likewise, the history of science in the Cold War is not what it once was. Here too, scholarship employing transnational and global perspectives is complicating and challenging earlier assumptions about and interpretations of science

during the conflict. These analytical frameworks are casting fresh light on the depth, breadth, diversity and scope of the transformation of science during the global Cold War. This is opening new vistas onto the variation in the characteristics, patterns and dynamics of science within and between different countries, and across the east-west and north-south divides, during the conflict. If this is helping to better understand the shifting temporalities of the Cold War it also underlines the need to situate “Cold War science” in relation to the years preceding and following the conflict: both can help illuminate what, if anything, was exceptional about science in this era.

All of this raises novel questions and poses intriguing challenges for the field. It is in this context that we launch this seminar series. As a priority we hope to showcase groundbreaking work that takes up these challenges. In terms of focus, we would highlight the following three themes that offer promising prospects for innovative and fruitful scholarship:

Science diplomacy

By this we mean the synergistic and/or antagonistic relationships between scientists and diverse actors at the intersection between science, politics, policymaking, and diplomacy including, for example, non-state actors, NGOs, scientists’ organizations, fellow “dissident” scientists, philanthropic initiatives, business corporations and state actors.

Scientific institutions

There remains much to uncover about the development, activities and roles of scientific institutions—locally, nationally, internationally—throughout the Cold War, including analyses that consider their internal politics, their relations with national governments and how self-fashioned agendas and identities were conceived and formulated.

The environment and earth system governance

In the 1970s, different conceptions of the environment and “earth-as-system” took shape in the East and the West. The concept of the Anthropocene has its roots in an earlier global ecological turn and cannot be understood in isolation from its Cold War heritage. The Anthropocene offers a new framework for thinking about the environment and for assessing the global impacts of humanity on the planet.

PROGRAM 2020 (PROVISIONAL)

January, 31st

HIROMI MIZUNO (Minnesota, US)

February, 27th

ISABELLE SCHRICKEL (Lüneburg, Germany)

March, 24th

ELISE K. BURTON (Cambridge, UK)

April, 30th

PERRIN SELCER (Michigan, US)

May, 12th

GORDON BARRETT (Oxford, UK)

June, 09th

MARIA RENTETZI (TU, Berlin)