THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

FACULTY OF ARTS

School of Historical and Philosophical Studies

Joseph-Nicolas Robert-Fleury, Galileo before the Holy Office, 1847

Short Course: The Galileo Affair

Wednesdays 7–28 June, 6.15–8.15pm

The 'Galileo Affair', as it has come to be known, remains one of the most fascinating episodes in the history of science. It is often taken as an illustration of the repressive attitude of the Catholic Church to the rise of modern science in the 17th century, and an example of the fundamental conflict between science and religion. Yet, it has been subject to distortion and myth, and continues to spark intense disagreement among historians, scientists and philosophers. In 1632 Galileo published his Dialogue on the *Two Chief World Systems,* in which he defended the Copernican view that the earth moves around the sun. He was duly summoned to appear before the Holy Roman Inquisition to answer the charge of vehement suspicion of heresy. Forced to recant, he was sentenced to serve the remaining 9 years of his life under house arrest. The fall out was enormous, and forever changed the way we view the relationship between science and religion. But what was the Galileo Affair really about? Was it simply the suppression of scientific truth by an oppressive religious authority? Or was it a more complex episode, in which doubts about scientific evidence could not be separated from the interpretation of Scripture, the political context of the Counter-Reformation, the turmoil of the thirty years war, and even Italian court culture?

In this short course, we focus on these questions, in an attempt to shed light on this fascinating episode. Each session takes a different historical perspective, as we delve beyond the myth, in search of a deeper understanding of one of the defining episodes of Western history.

Wednesday 7 June

Introducing the Scientific Controversy: Does the Earth Move?

We begin the course with an introduction to the scientific controversy at the heart of the Galileo affair. What were the arguments and evidence in favour of the traditional view that the sun revolved around the earth, and how did Galileo make his case for the controversial view that the earth revolved around the sun?

Wednesday 14 June

Galileo and the Catholic Church: The Interpretation of Scripture

This week, we turn our gaze to the problem of the interpretation of scripture in the context of the Counter-Reformation. What was the Catholic Church's official position on Copernicanism, and how did Galileo propose to reconcile the Copernican view with passages in the Bible that suggested the sun was immobile?

Wednesday 21 June

Science, Culture and Politics: Renaissance Italy and the Thirty Years War

This week, we widen our perspective to encompass the wider social, political and cultural context of the Galileo affair. In doing so, we gain a deeper understanding of how the affair was shaped by Galileo's cultural identity as a courtier for the Grand Duke of Tuscany and the political turmoil of the Thirty Years War.

Wednesday 28 June

The Uses and Abuses of History: What Have We Learned from the Galileo Affair?

In the final session, we examine how various historical accounts of the Galileo affair have been used throughout history in the service of various agendas. Here we reflect on what this complex and fascinating episode might tell us about the conflict between science and religion.

Presenter

Dr Kristian Camilleri

Kristian Camilleri is a lecturer in the History and Philosophy of Science program (HPS) in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies. After studying physics and HPS at Melbourne University, he completed his PhD in HPS at Melbourne University in 2005. Kristian has published extensively in the history and philosophy of modern physics, and in 2009 he published a monograph with Cambridge University Press entitled *Heisenberg and the Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics: The Physicist as Philosopher.* He has also written on such topics as Galileo's thought experiments, the role of metaphors in science, and the recent debates over string theory. He teaches across a broad range of subjects in the history and philosophy of science, with a particular focus on the history of science, the epistemology of scientific practice and the relationship between science and religion.

Cost:

Refreshments and further reading suggestions are included each week.

Individual session: 2 hours each	$65 / $55*
Series pass: 8 hours	$250 / $200*

** University of Melbourne Alumni, staff and students*

Venue:

Macmahon Ball Theatre, Old Arts Building
The University of Melbourne, Parkville

Registrations:

http://alumni.online.unimelb.edu.au/galileoaffair

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