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STS.003 The Rise of Modern Science
Spring 2008

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STS.003 Second Paper Assignment

Due Date: paper must be submitted online prior to Ses #24.

Length: 2000 words

Grading: This paper will form 20% of the final course grade, as much as your final exam. Late papers will be penalized one full grade (e.g. A->B->C) for each day.

Instructions: Using Loren Graham's article (from the Week 9 readings) as a model, write a paper that compares two different cultural interpretations of the same scientific theory, concept, or principle. You may choose any theory or concept that has been mentioned in the lectures (or will have been mentioned before Ses #24) with two exceptions:

1. You cannot discuss the work of the scientist about whom you wrote your First Paper for this course.
2. You cannot use any examples of cultural interpretations that are discussed in detail in your required readings. That is, you may write about relativity theory, but you cannot use Eddington or Fock as your examples. You may use examples that are mentioned in passing in the readings.

The term "cultural interpretation" refers to the discussions of science that are addressed to the general public, not just to the scientific community.

The paper must have:

- a title;
- page numbers;
- references (footnotes or inside the text) to specific sources/pages;
- a bibliography.

You must not limit yourself to the readings assigned in the course. You should find and use new sources. At least two new sources (one for each example) must be academic publications - books or articles by professional historians. Avoid trivial information easily found on Wikipedia or similar websites. You can use the bibliographies included with entries in the Dictionary of Scientific Biography as a starting point in searching for new sources.

In the conclusion, draw lessons from your examples. What do different cultural interpretations tell us about the relationship between science and wider culture? About politics and social values in the specific societies in which these interpretations emerge? Does a scientific theory limit the range of its cultural interpretations? Can one talk about "correct" or "incorrect" cultural interpretations?