

# NATURAL THINGS CONFERENCE

Hamilton College | April 7-9 2019

## COLLECTION & THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE IN THE AGE OF GLOBAL EMPIRES

*Mackenzie Cooley*  
*Assistant Professor, Department of History*

*Cosponsored by:*

*Dean of Faculty*  
*Library and IT Services*  
*Digital Humanities Initiative*  
*Humanities Center*  
*AHA! Making Scientific Knowledge*  
*History Department*  
*Asian Studies*

About the conference:

Natural history was once the ultimate interdisciplinary pursuit. Before it became Knox Hall in 1830, Hamilton students visited the Cabinet, a reference to the cabinets of curiosities that brought together all of nature's marvels. Human remains, American antiquities, taxidermied animals, botanical samples, and more inspired wonder. The Cabinet was a scientific oasis on a resolutely neoclassical campus.

Then the specialist disciplines came. The collection no longer cohered as natural history. Wonder had ceased to be a valuable tool of inquiry. Eventually, the animals went to the Science Center, native American regalia to the Wellin museum, books to Special Collections, and remains to anthropology, among other collections across central New York. Disciplines consumed the Cabinet, leaving vestiges and isolated specimens in their wake.

The Natural Things Conference is a renaissance of natural history, and with it the Cabinet's ethos, for one short weekend. Building on the work of the Natural Things | Ad Fontes Naturae Research Group founded at Stanford University, presenters chart the expansion of natural science in the age of global empires. The conference brings together cutting-edge scholars of science to consider how naturalists aspired to establish a universal knowledge of nature between 1500 and 1900. The conference will connect scholars and students across the humanities and sciences by focusing on themes of collecting and the history of biology.

In the early modern era, Europeans sought to create a global natural history that could accommodate the plants and animals they encountered overseas into one unified system of knowledge characterized by a shared classificatory system. Between the creation of natural history and the age of Darwin, European scholars and explorers curated extensive collections of naturalia complete with exotic animals, plants, and minerals from which they would abstract the principles underpinning the modern scientific tradition. Non-Europeans, including the Ottomans and the Mexica, however, provided their own explanations of nature. Encounters between Europeans and non-Europeans led naturalists to challenge and expand their perceptions of the world. Natural Things seeks to understand how quests for knowing nature overlapped with different knowledge cultures, expanding the Scientific Revolution's traditional boundaries. In collaboration with Hamilton's DHi, the new digital approaches employed by conference participants will enhance the study of networks, geography, language, and objects in order to grapple with the global character of knowledge creation.

# KEYNOTES

SUNDAY APRIL 7

<p>11:30 am <b>Keynote Lecture</b></p> <p><b>Taylor Science Center G041</b></p>	<p><b>Iris Montero</b> (Visiting Assistant Professor of Hispanic Studies, Brown University)</p> <p>“Human and More-Than-Human Migrants in the Americas”</p>
<p>5:00 pm <b>Keynote Lecture</b></p> <p><b>Wellin Museum – Overlook 201</b></p>	<p><b>Ben Breen</b> (Assistant Professor of History, University of Santa Cruz)</p> <p>“Dragon’s Blood, Mummies, and Moss: Tracing the Mistaken Identities of Drugs in the Early Modern Portuguese Empire in the Indian Ocean and Beyond”</p>

MONDAY APRIL 8

<p>12:00 pm <b>Couper Lecture - Keynote</b></p>	<p>Introduction: Joe Shelley, Vice President for Libraries and Information Technology</p> <p><b>Nicolaas Rupke</b> (Johnson Professor of History, Washington and Lee University)</p>
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**Taylor Science Center  
G027**

“Contested museum objects in Darwin’s century”

4:00 pm  
**Keynote Address**

**Alan Mikhail** (Professor of History, Yale University)

**Taylor Science Center  
3024**

“Food and Wood between the Mediterranean and Red Sea: Economy and Ecology in the Ottoman Empire”

TUESDAY APRIL 9

4:00 pm  
**Keynote Lecture**

**Rebecca Woods** (Assistant Professor of History of Science, University of Toronto)

**Taylor Science  
Center G027**

“Body of Animal, Body of Evidence: Frozen Pleistocene Animals and the History of Natural History”

# PROGRAM

SUNDAY APRIL 7

<b>Taylor Science Center Atrium</b>	<i>Registration at library with continental breakfast</i>
9:00 am	Introductory Remarks
9:30 am	<b>Shireen Hamza</b> (PhD Candidate, Harvard University)
<b>Taylor Science Center G042</b>	“Novelty in Ṭibb: The Origins of China Root in South Asia”
10:30 am	<b>Duygu Yildirim</b> (PhD Candidate, Stanford University)

**Taylor Science  
Center G042**

“Ways of Knowing: Quest for the Natural History of Coffee in the Seventeenth Century”

11:30 am  
**Keynote  
Lecture**

**Iris Montero** (Visiting Assistant Professor of Hispanic Studies, Brown University)

**Taylor Science  
Center G041**

“Human and More-Than-Human Migrants in the Americas”

12:30-1:30 pm

*Lunch*

**Taylor Science  
Center Atrium**

1:30 pm

**Student Presentation  
Kate Biedermann '22**

**Taylor Science  
Center 2048**

“Tracking a Global Fascination: A Study of the Early Modern Bezoar Trade”

2:00 pm

**Taylor Science  
Center 2048**

**Mackenzie Cooley** (Assistant Professor of History, Hamilton College)

“The Stone in the Beast: Bezoars, Global Medicine, and Natural Order”

3:00 pm

**Wellin Museum  
– Overlook 201**

### **BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

#### ***Option 1: Navigating the Fog of Scientific Uncertainty***

Fireside Chat – Hosted by the AHA! Group on Making Scientific Knowledge

Chair: Rebecca Woods (Science and Technology Studies, University of Toronto)

**Taylor Science  
Center 2048**

#### ***Option 2: Taylor Moore*** (PhD Candidate, Rutgers University)

“The Rhinoceros Horn and the Black Eggplant: An Experiment in (Un)Natural Histories”

*Remote Participation*

<p><b>Wellin Museum Classroom</b></p>	<p><b><i>Ongoing from 3:00-5:00 pm. Open House in the Wellin Museum with Ali Zildjian '19</i></b>  <i>"Reconstructing the Cabinet: Natural Things in the Lesser Antilles Collection"</i></p> <p>Launch of Vikus Viewer Comparative Platform</p>
<p>5:00 pm  <b>Keynote Lecture</b></p> <p><b>Wellin Museum – Overlook 201</b></p>	<p><b>Ben Breen</b> (Assistant Professor of History, University of Santa Cruz)</p> <p><i>"Dragon's Blood, Mummies, and Moss: Tracing the Mistaken Identities of Drugs in the Early Modern Portuguese Empire in the Indian Ocean and Beyond"</i></p>
<p>6:30 pm</p>	<p><i>Cocktail Reception at the Wellin Museum</i></p>
<p>7:30 pm</p>	<p><i>Formal Dinner for Selected Guests at Dwight Lounge- Bristol Center</i></p>

MONDAY APRIL 8



	<i>Continental Breakfast</i>
9:00 am <b>Burke Library-Stryker All Night Reading Room</b>	<b>Elaine Ayers</b> (Postdoctoral Fellow, Princeton University)  “Drowning in Her Sweet Nectar:’ Plant Carnivory, Colonial Consumption, and the Politics of Floral Flesh in Nineteenth Century Borneo”
10:00 am <b>Burke Library-Stryker All Night Reading Room</b>	<b>Alex Statman</b> (Postdoctoral Fellow, Huntington Library)  “Cross-Cultural Canals and the Control of Water in the Indo-Pacific”
	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11:15 am	<i>Student Presentation</i>

**Burke Library-Stryker All Night Reading Room**

**Edsel Llaurador '19**

“Agave Republic: Tlaxcalan Knowledge for the Spanish Empire”

12:00 pm

**Couper Lecture - Keynote**

Introduction: Joe Shelley, Vice President for Libraries and Information Technology

**Taylor Science Center G027**

**Nicolaas Rupke** (Johnson Professor of History, Washington & Lee University)

“Contested museum objects in Darwin’s century”

*1:15-2:00 pm*

*Lunch Reception*

2:00 pm

**Burke Library-Stryker All Night Reading Room**

**Anna Toledano** (PhD Candidate, Stanford University)

“Taxonomic Colonialism: The Persistence of Linguistic Hybridity in Azara’s South American Species Names”

<p>3:00 pm</p> <p><b>Burke Library-Stryker All Night Reading Room</b></p>	<p><b>Claire Sabel</b> (PhD Student, University of Pennsylvania)</p> <p>“Coal, a mineral formed by vegetables:’ Plant fossils and the evolution of botanical commodities in early modern Europe”</p>
	<p><i>Coffee Break</i></p>
<p>4:00 pm</p> <p><b>Keynote Address</b></p> <p><b>Taylor Science Center 3024</b></p>	<p><b>Alan Mikhail</b> (Professor of History, Yale University)</p> <p>“Food and Wood between the Mediterranean and Red Sea: Economy and Ecology in the Ottoman Empire”</p>
<p>5:30 pm</p>	<p><i>Reception at the Library</i></p>
<p>6:30 pm</p>	<p><i>Formal Dinner for Selected Guests</i></p>

TUESDAY APRIL 9

*Continental Breakfast*

9:00 am

**BREAKOUT SESSION**

**Burke Library-Stryker All Night Reading Room**

***Student Presentation***

Natural Things in Motion Presentation from students from HIST 226 “History of Ideas: Science and Revolutions”

**Kenan Akin '19** “From Weaponry to Electricity: How Copper’s Importance Has Shifted Over Time”

**Duncan Davies '21** “Nutritional Knowledge: How Maize Influenced Legislation and the Circulation of Knowledge”

**Zhichun (Joy) Zhang '22** “Recycling the Philosopher’s Stone”

9:30 am

**Burke Library-Stryker All Night Reading Room**

***Student Presentation***

**Antton de Arbeloa '21 with Kayla Self '21**

“Digital Humanities and Indigenous Nature: Dogs and Iguanas in the *Relaciones Geográficas*”

*Coffee Break*

10:00 am

**Burke Library-Stryker All Night Reading Room**

**Julia Hiedeklang** (PhD Candidate, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

“Writing Histories of (Medico-)Botanical Knowledge in 16<sup>th</sup>-Century Europe: Mapping Paratextual Strategies”

11:00 am

**Burke Library-Stryker All Night Reading Room**

**Whitney Barlow Robles** (Postdoctoral Fellow, Dartmouth Society of Fellows)

“The Kitchen in the Cabinet: Natural History as Food History”

*Remote Presentation*

12:00-2:00 pm

**Burke Library-Stryker All Night Reading Room**

*Lunch*

1:00 pm

*Walking Tour of the Root Glen with Ernest Williams*

2:00 pm

**Burke Library-Stryker All Night Reading Room**

**Florencia Pierri** (PhD Candidate, Princeton University)

“Animals in Search of a Place: Armadillos in Early Modern Europe”

3:00 pm

**Burke Library-Stryker All Night Reading Room**

**Concluding Remarks**

**Mackenzie Cooley** (Hamilton College)

Material Remains and New Approaches to Intellectual History

4:00 pm

**Keynote Lecture**

**Taylor Science Center G027**

**Rebecca Woods** (Assistant Professor of History of Science, University of Toronto)

“Body of Animal, Body of Evidence: Frozen Pleistocene Animals and the History of Natural History”

*Closing Reception at the Pub*