



Alexander Jones is a classicist and historian of science whose work centers on the history of astronomy and related mathematical and physical sciences in the Greco-Roman world, with particular focus on the circulation, transformation, and representation of scientific knowledge. He is the author of editions of Greek scientific texts, among them Pappos of Alexandria's commentary on the corpus of Hellenistic geometrical treatises known as the Treasury of Analysis; an anonymous Byzantine astronomical handbook based on Islamic sources; and a collection of about two hundred fragmentary astronomical texts, tables, and horoscopes from among the papyri excavated by A. Grenfell and B. Hunt at Oxyrhynchos. His current interests include contacts between Babylonian, Egyptian, and Greco-Roman astronomy and astrology, artifacts of Hellenistic astronomy such as the Antikythera Mechanism, and the scientific work of Ptolemy.

After studying classics at the University of British Columbia and the history of the ancient mathematical sciences in the Department of the History of Mathematics at Brown University, he was for sixteen years on the faculty of the Department of Classics and the Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology at the University of Toronto. He is now Professor of the History of the Exact Sciences in Antiquity at the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York University.

THE MATERIALITY OF TIME IN ANTIQUITY

Public Lectures

I. The Revolutions of the Hours

Fr. 26.06. 2015, 18:00 Uhr, Neue Universität, HS 14

II. The Synchrony of the Ages

Mi.01.07.2015, 18:00 Uhr, Neue Universität, HS 14

ANCIENT ASTRAL SCIENCE IN TEXTS AND ARTIFACTS

Workshops*

I. Sun, Moon, Stars, and Calendars

Do. 02.07.2015, 14:00 Uhr,
Seminar für Klassische Philologie, kleiner Übungsraum

II. Eclipses

Di.07.07.2015, 14:00 Uhr, Institut für Papyrologie, Bibliothek

III. Planets and Cosmologies

Do. 09.07.2015, 14:00 Uhr,
Seminar für Klassische Philologie, kleiner Übungsraum

*To attend, please register with Dr. Rodney Ast (ast@uni-heidelberg.de)

KONTAKT

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Public Lectures and
Workshops

Prof. Dr. Alexander
Jones

Professor of the History of the
Exact Sciences in Antiquity,
New York University

Public Lectures
The Materiality of Time in Antiquity

Workshops
Ancient Astral Science in Texts and Artifacts

Fr. 26.06. — Do. 09.07. 2015



SFB 933 „Materiale Textkulturen“
Subprojects A02 „Antike Briefe als Kommunikationsmedium“
and A03 „Materialität und Präsenz magischer Zeichen“



PUBLIC LECTURES: THE MATERIALITY OF TIME IN ANTIQUITY

I. The Revolutions of the Hours

Fr. 26.06. 2015, 18:00 Uhr, Neue Universität, HS 14

The ancient Greeks appropriated from Egypt and the Near East the basic techniques of dividing the night and day into hours by watching stars, shadows, and the flow of water, and transformed them into displays of cosmology, mathematics, and mechanical ingenuity. The fundamental concept behind Greco-Roman timekeeping was geometry in motion: the spherical heavens revolving with constant speed around the spherical Earth, while the Sun travels more slowly through the stars along its own circular orbit. The most familiar instrument for telling time, the sundial, was designed to be a projection of the spherical cosmos, guaranteeing that every hour of the day was equal and correct for the season and for one's location on the Earth. The mechanical water clock showed how mundane matter could be made to imitate the regularity of the heavenly bodies, producing a moving image of the sky. The objects illustrating this lecture will include elegant and sophisticated sundials of several designs, and the much scarcer remains of water-driven devices.

II. The Synchrony of the Ages

Mi.01.07.2015, 18:00 Uhr, Neue Universität, HS 14

People in the Greco-Roman world lived according to a profusion of cycles of time ranging from a few days (e.g. series of markets in various towns) to multiple years (e.g. the Olympic festivals) in addition to the calendars that regulated their religious and other civic activities. In the cosmos too, the Sun, Moon, stars, and planets had disparate cycles governing their appearances and disappearances and motions. Astronomers sought ever-more-accurate measures of these cosmic periodicities and used them to bring orderliness into the operation of calendars and other social time cycles. Thinking in the longer term, they speculated whether all the heavenly bodies might return to their starting positions in some enormous „Great Year“ comprising tens of thousands of ordinary years. This lecture will look at how ideas of cyclic time on the scale of days, months, years, and eons were represented visually through peg-board inscriptions, mechanical devices such as the Antikythera Mechanism, and imagery.

WORKSHOPS: ANCIENT ASTRAL SCIENCE IN TEXTS AND ARTIFACTS*

Each workshop will introduce basic concepts of the astronomy and astrology of the Greco-Roman world and their antecedents in Mesopotamia and Egypt as a basis for exploring a selection of texts, images, and objects that pertain to the practices and perceptions of these sciences.

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