

Schedule

12:00 – 13:00

Sabine Arnaud [MPIWG Berlin]
Fashioning a Role for French Medicine:
Physicians and Teachers Struggle for
Authority (1847-1867)

13:00 – 14:00

Lunch break

14:00 – 15:00

Claire Shaw [University of Bristol]
We Do Our Deeds in Silence, and Our
Deeds Speak for Us: Visions of
Russian Deaf Selfhood after 1917

15:00 – 16:00

Florence Encrevé
[University of Paris VII]
The History of the Deaf and the
Evolution of French Society Since the
Eighteenth Century: Sign Language
and the Idea of Progress



The event is free.
Please register:
lfrenzer@mpiwg-berlin.de

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HISTORY OF SCIENCE

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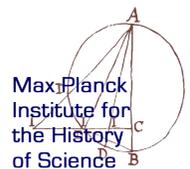
Perspectives on Deafness in Eighteenth- to Twentieth- Century France and Russia



Conference Room

Workshop organized by
Sabine Arnaud
In German Sign Language,
International Sign Language and
Spoken English

MPIWG Research
Group:
The Construction of
Norms in 17th to 19th
Century Europe and the
United States



Sabine Arnaud

Fashioning a Role for French
Medicine: Physicians and Teachers
Struggle for Authority (1847-1867)

Abstract: In the late eighteenth century, medicine was not part of the institutional approach to 'deaf-mutes' in the Western world: it was teachers rather than doctors who could claim competence for their care. Yet by the second half of the nineteenth century, doctors had supplanted teachers in this role, despite having made no major therapeutic contributions. The change proceeded via a series of crises in which specialists confronted each other on professional and disciplinary grounds. How did doctors position themselves in their dialogue with educators? How did they construct their own identity within a discipline dominated by teachers? How did they secure the support of the state and of deaf people themselves? How did they announce and consolidate their presence within a field of forces? This article illuminates the strategies pursued in the production and reception of medical knowledge, by examining the controversies around Parisian physician Alexandre Blanchet during the 1840s.

Claire Shaw

'We Do Our Deeds in Silence, and
Our Deeds Speak for Us': Visions of
Russian Deaf Selfhood after 1917.

Abstract: In the aftermath of the Russian revolutions of 1917, deafness became a key experimental ground on which new theories of revolutionary selfhood were played out. On the one hand, the work of revolutionary psychologists such as Lev Vygotskii cast deafness as a hangover of the capitalist era, a practical obstacle which deaf individuals would leap - with the help of sign-language interpretation, education and social welfare structures - to become labourers and citizens on an equal footing with their hearing peers. On the other, Marxist theories of language focused on oral speech as the key to attaining revolutionary 'consciousness', and condemned sign language as the root of deaf people's inherent and ineradicable 'abnormality'. This paper explores the tensions and overlaps between these two visions of deaf selfhood, and considers how their legacies were played out in the deaf social organisations of the Soviet 1920s and 1930s.

Florence Encrevé

The History of the Deaf and the
Evolution of French Society Since
the Eighteenth Century: Sign
Language and the Idea of Progress

Abstract: The history of French deaf people is one of sidelining people considered disabled in the name of the unity of a supposed common language, French. My project studies the evolution of French society since the eighteenth century from the point of view of the deaf and how society perceived them. My Ph.D. thesis in history focused on the nineteenth century, from 1830 to 1905. During this period, the philosophy of progress—which first blossomed during the eighteenth century—gradually gained strength, while less and less attention was paid to the deaf and sign language was less and less accepted. Those who did not know sign language believed that it inferiorized deaf people and was counter to progress; deaf people, however, did not agree. My research argues that sign language fell victim to a certain interpretation of the idea of progress, which ultimately relegated deaf people to a position of inequality.