



# Stipendiatenkolloquium

**Dienstag, 27. September 2011; 18:15 Uhr**

**Forschungszentrum Gotha (Seminarraum im Pagenhaus, Schloss Friedenstein)**

**Dr. Denise Phillips (Tennessee)**

**The Philosophical Farmer: Expertise and Agricultural Productivity in Enlightenment Germany.**

Recent work on Germany's "Economic Enlightenment" has pointed out that this period laid the groundwork for later structures of expert resource management. Building from this insight, my project examines how agricultural expertise was constructed in enlightenment Germany. Who could plausibly portray themselves as an agricultural expert, and how was this status negotiated? Many different kinds of people wrote on agricultural improvement; urban seed merchants, rural autodidacts, noble landlords, and members of the learned professions all offered the enlightened public farming advice. This fact makes agriculture a particularly interesting site in which to explore the interaction of social and epistemic factors in constructing authoritative knowledge claims in the eighteenth century. In comparison to the large body of work on other early modern technical fields, the agricultural sciences are also relatively uncharted ground, and recent developments in the study of early modern natural knowledge make these fields ripe for reexamination. In addressing the interrelationship between theory and practice in the early modern period, historians of science have found it fruitful to move beyond questions about how "science" was applied to "technology" (since both categories are anachronistic for these centuries). Instead, they have begun to explore the complex ways in which technical and theoretical practices were intertwined. My project examines how eighteenth-century thinkers negotiated the boundary line between theory and practice, and the ways in which theoretical knowledge and technical know-how mutually informed shared definitions of what counted as legitimate natural knowledge.

**Dr. Denise Phillips** is an Assistant Professor of History at the University of Tennessee. Her first book, "Acolytes of Nature: Defining Natural Science in Germany, 1770-1850," is forthcoming from the University of Chicago Press in Spring 2012. Her current project on the history of the agricultural sciences has been supported by grants from the Fulbright Commission and the DAAD.

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