



THE “KNOWING HANDS” BOOK TALK SERIES PRESENTS:

Alison Bashford - “Decoding the Hand: A History of Science, Medicine, and Magic”

Thursday, May 21st 2026, at 13:00-14.30 (CET) / Zoom-Link:

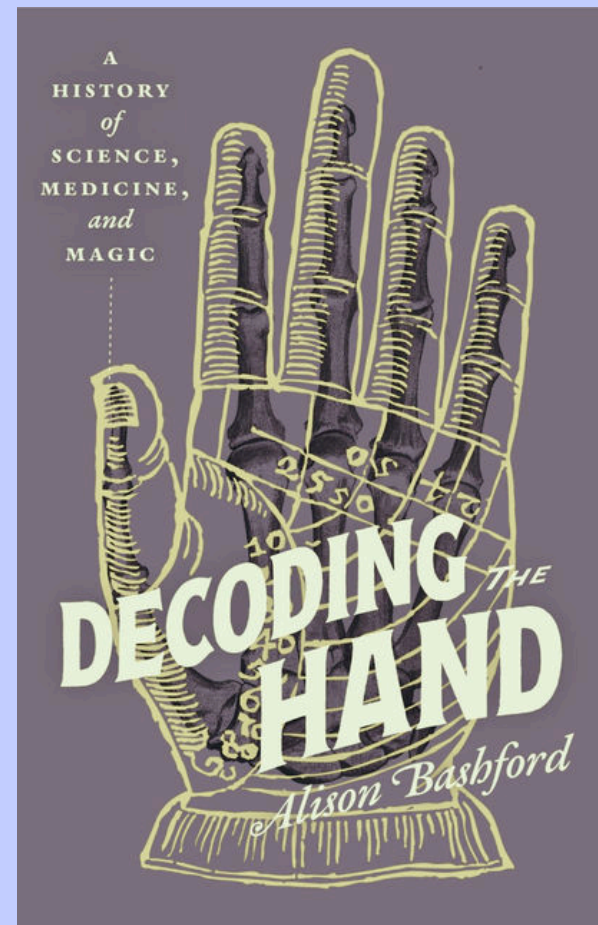
<https://zoom.us/j/97094579301>

Discussant: Marta Hanson



Book Description

In “Decoding the Hand”, historian of science and medicine Alison Bashford tackles the complex, and often unexpected, history of palmistry from antiquity to the present day. The subject encompasses hand-based predictive practices from chiromancy (hand logic) and chiromancy (hand divination) to the biometrics of palm prints and fingerprinting. Bashford builds her well-structured narrative around concrete case studies that proceed from Part 1 on “the early languages of the hand (ancient Greek, Sanskrit, Hebrew, Arabic, and Latin) to Part 2, “the modernization and medicalization of palmistry” in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and concludes with Part 3 on “Decoding the Hand in twentieth-century biosciences.” Through this study of how a wide range of people, from fortune-telling palmists to geneticists, have read our hands’ surface for our inner qualities, Bashford presents a fascinating history of science, medicine, and magic.



Join us for a conversation with Prof. Alison Bashford (University of New South Wales) on her new book “Decoding the Hand - A History of Science, Medicine and Magic.” More information about the event can be found [here](#).

For inquiries, please contact:

- Prof. Marta Hanson (marta.hanson@fau.de)
- Jasmin Rother (jasmin.lea.rother@fau.de)