



Seminar

FREDRIK CHARPENTIER LJUNGQVIST

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Climate Variability and Food (In)Security in Medieval and Early Modern Europe

Tuesday, 3 March 2020, 2:15 p.m.

In the Thunberg Lecture Hall
SCAS, Linneanum, Thunbergsvägen 2, Uppsala
www.swedishcollegium.se

S W E D I S H
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ABOUT FREDRIK CHARPENTIER LJUNGQVIST

Fredrik Charpentier Ljungqvist is an historian and palaeoclimatologist at Stockholm University. He started his academic career as a medieval historian, but has increasingly conducted research within palaeoclimatology (climate history), using mainly natural “proxy” archives (tree-ring data etc.) to reconstruct and understand temperature and hydroclimate variability during the past two millennia, as well as to study climatic impacts on human history. His current research interests range from the link between past climate variability and historical harvest yields to the effect of plague outbreaks on the history of European building activity, socio-political aspects of historical food (in)security, and the legal content of medieval Scandinavian laws. Ljungqvist spent time between 2017 and 2019 as a Visiting Scholar at the Department of Geography, University of Cambridge, and has close research collaborations across Europe and in China. He is an experienced university teacher and is also actively engaged in popular science and public outreach activities. He is the author of three popular science books – for the first two of which he was awarded the Clio Prize in 2016 – and frequently gives popular science lectures and makes contributions to media.

Among Ljungqvist’s more recent key publications are the articles “Northern Hemisphere hydroclimate variability over the past twelve centuries” in *Nature* (2016), “Linking European building activity with plague history” in *Journal of Archaeological Science* (2018), “Centennial-scale temperature change in last millennium simulations and proxy-based reconstructions” in *Journal of Climate* (2019), and the monograph *Lagfäst kungamakt under högmedeltiden* (Legally Regulated Royal Power during the High Middle Ages, 2016).

As a Pro Futura Scientia Fellow, he leads the interdisciplinary project “Disentangling socio-political and climatic factors for food insecurity in early modern Europe (c. 1500–1800)”.

ABSTRACT

The lecture will summarise my preliminary findings from two forthcoming articles, both part of my interdisciplinary project “Disentangling socio-political and climatic factors for food insecurity in early modern Europe (c. 1500–1800)”. I will begin with an overview of state-of-the-art scholarship linking climate changes to human history in medieval and early modern Europe (e.g., through impacts on agricultural productivity). The talk will demonstrate how disciplinary boundaries, and knowledge gaps arising from limited interaction between natural and human sciences, have hampered this recently expanding research field. I will then present new findings about how climate variability was a driving force behind grain price variability across Europe c. 1500–1800. These new results reveal stronger long-term effects of temperature variability on historical grain prices in Europe than previously thought. Such a conclusion implies that temperature variability has been a more important factor in European economic history, even in southern Europe, than commonly acknowledged.