

Monday April 26th 4:00 pm 470 Stephens Hall UC Berkeley

Berkeley Spring 2010 Colloquia in  
History of Science and Technology  
*presents*

***From Authentic Miracles to a Rhetoric of  
Authenticity: Examples from the Canoniza-  
tion and Cult of St. Vincent Ferrer (d. 1419)***

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This talk traces a shifting set of approaches to the problem of authenticating miracles in the fifteenth century and beyond, drawing examples from the canonization and cult of the itinerant apocalyptic preacher Vincent Ferrer (1350-1419). On the one hand, during canonization inquests, prospective miracles were collected and scrutinized with an eye to proving their authenticity and providing evidence of the candidate's sanctity. On the other hand, miracles performed other specific functions: what defined a miracle for scholastic theologians was as much its utility as its supernatural character. That second definition gave priority to the pious message inherent in a miracle tale, but not so much to the demonstration of the miracle's surpassing the bounds of nature. Accordingly, outside of the confines of the canonization process, one finds several alternative approaches to proclaiming a miracle's authenticity, from the public advertisement of miracles at a potential saint's tomb, to the adoption of a "rhetoric of authenticity" by authors of the saint's life, for whom miracle tales often could drive home a polemical point.

*Presented By:*

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