Swedish History of Ideas

Required reading and theoretical framework for the course is:


1. Erland Sellberg, The learned culture in early-modern Sweden

My lecture will be an introduction to the whole course. First I will give a brief outline of the political culture and its peculiar features of which some are still prevalent in modern Sweden. The focus of the lecture, however, will be the learned culture from the Reformation in the 16th century right up to the middle of the 18th century.

Reading:


The subject of this lecture is the world-famous botanist of the 18th century, Carl Linnaeus, and his achievements. Linnaeus’ influential classification of the world of plants (and, incidentally, of man), as well as his more lasting binominal system and some of his lesser-known preoccupations and ideas, will be dealt with in the context of his time and place. The world-encompassing voyages of his many disciples, or as he called them himself, his ”apostles”, will also be discussed.

Reading:


3. Elisabeth Mansén: Women´s rights in 19th century Sweden

Sweden is supposed to be a progressive country regarding women’s rights. This seminar puts that opinion in perspective, using controversial texts by widely read authors. The Swedish
discussion on women’s rights was intense in the middle of the 19th century. It was present in politics as well as in popular fiction, and resulted in changes in thought and attitude as well as major changes in society and law. Both men and women were active. But even if women had some right to vote already in the 1720’s, the final decision was taken in 1921, putting Sweden years behind the other Nordic countries.

Reading:

Students are supposed to read these texts in advance and be prepared to discuss their impressions. The books are in print (sort of) and can be bought, but you can also read them online or download them.

Fredrika Bremer: Hertha's dream, from Hertha (1856), p. 79-103.

http://books.google.se/books?id=l_4NAAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=fredrika+bremer+hertha&hl=sv&sa=X&ei=ITIBUfuLKcat4ASQ9YHoBA&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA


http://ia600303.us.archive.org/25/items/saravidebeckchap00almq/saravidebeckchap00almq.pdf

4. Karin Dirke: The patriotism of migrating birds: Sweden viewed from above

The lecture deals with the changing zoology in Sweden during the 19th century and its representation in nationalistic literature such as Selma Lagerlöf’s The wonderful adventures of Nils (1906-7). The migrating geese in the book provide a view of the Swedish nation from above and at the same time represent didactic patriotism. Lagerlöf’s book is also seen as a result of the new zoology of the 19th century which linked the Swedish fauna with the nation’s geography.

Reading:

Students are expected to read the chapters from the wonderful adventures of Nils in advance and be prepared to discuss them.

Lagerlöf, Selma: The wonderful adventures of Nils (1906-7) the following chapters are to be read: “The boy”, “Akka from Kebnekaise”, “Westbottom and Lapland”, “Homeward bound!”, “The parting with the wild geese”.

http://archive.org/stream/wonderfuladventu001858 - page/4/mode/2up

5. David Östlund: "The People's Home and the spirit of modernity"

A key concept in contemporary Swedish self-perceptions and political language is "the People's Home". It is strongly linked to images of the era of Social Democratic cabinets from 1932 through 1976, as well as another complex key concept - that of "the Swedish Model". Most understandings of these concepts tend to focus on the interwar years, and the genesis of cultural modernity as the probably most prominent aspect of specifically Swedish identities.


6. Lena Lennerhed (Södertörn University): Sex Reform in Sweden

The seminar/lecture will focus on the regulation of sexuality in Sweden in the 20th century, in particular ideas and debate on sex education in school, contraceptives, abortion, sterilization and homosexuality. The image of Sweden as ”sinful” or ”progressive” will also be dealt with.

Reading:


Lennerhed, Lena, ”Sex Reform in the 1930’s and 1940’s: RFSU, the Swedish Association for Sex Education” in Tedebrand (ed), *Sex, State and Society. Comparative Perspectives on the History of Sexuality* (Umeå 2000)


7. Elina Druker: Constructing national identity - Astrid Lindgren's children’s books

The lecture deals with how national identity, children and childhood are depicted and constructed in the Swedish author Astrid Lindgren's books during the 1940s and 1950s. The aesthetics and motifs in these books are discussed as a part of an ideological and aesthetic context in the decades following the Second World War.


Astrid Lindgren: *Children of Noisy village* or *Happy times in Noisy village* (many editions)