ABSTRACT

**Science and fatalism: Exploring a global nineteenth century debate**The degree to which scientific perspectives rely on deterministic conceptualizations of nature has been a topic of much debate over the centuries. Developments in physics and chemistry, as well as the theory of evolution gave a boost to this debate in the second half of the nineteenth century. Many scientists came to portray their understanding of the "immutable laws of nature" as the basis of their claim to not only scientific but cultural authority in this period. In turn, religious critics accused such scientists of advocating a fatalistic worldview that left no room for free will and moral responsibility. In this talk, I will describe the contours of the debate on scientific fatalism with examples from France, Britain, and the US, and discuss how the well-established discourse on "Oriental fatalism" and its tropes operated within it. Comparing the arguments made within this debate to late nineteenth century Ottoman views on science, religion, and fatalism, I will discuss how analyzing these parallel as well as intersecting debates contributes to our understanding of science in its global cultural and political context in the nineteenth century.

BIO
M. Alper Yalcinkaya received his PhD in Science Studies and Sociology from the University of California, San Diego. A scholar of the social and cultural history of science, he is the author of *Learned Patriots: Debating Science, State, and Society in the Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire* (2015) as well as articles and book chapters on science and religion in the Ottoman world.