Summer term: Wednesday evening, 6-8

Tutor: Katherine Harvey

The main emphasis of this course will be on the practice of medicine and on the range of options available to someone in pre-industrial society to treat sickness and to maintain health. Evidence will be drawn from across Europe, but the main emphasis will be on Italy and England, two countries with very different economic, political and religious characters, but linked through English admiration for Italian models of health care. The central aim will be to move away from the more traditional concentration on ‘medicine from above’ towards new approaches in the social history of medicine. Recently emphasis has been placed on a more integrated view of the medical market-place in which the patient has taken centre stage. He or she is seen as an active rather than a passive agent, whether in seeking to treat him or herself through domestic remedies, consulting licensed and unlicensed practitioners, attending his or her local hospital or going on pilgrimages to miracle shrines. Equal weight will thus be given to what traditionally have been viewed as the principle health-providers (physicians, surgeons, apothecaries) as to the vast number of more informal systems of healing (empirics, charlatans, herbalists and wise women). Each of these over-lapping ‘systems’ of healing will be seen as sharing many of the same ideas, whether this was the Galenic world-view or the relationship between natural and supernatural explanations of disease.