



Course Insights: History of Pharmacy

Faculty of the History and Philosophy of Medicine & Pharmacy

Alongside our well-established History of Medicine and Philosophy of Medicine courses, the Faculty also runs short courses to provide a taster of topics, allow delegates to dip into themes, or to consolidate existing interests. Having introduced a short History of Medicine course in 2009, more recently a 3 day History of Pharmacy course has been added to the programme, and this year is joined by a new 2 day Philosophy course. In this special newsletter, Maria Ferran finds out more from the course director Briony Hudson.

Watch this space for future Course Insights into the Faculty's Philosophy and History courses.

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Briony Hudson

Pharmacy Course Director



MF: Tell us a bit about yourself?

I'm a freelance pharmacy historian and museum curator who first came to Faculty events when I started as the Keeper of Museum Collections at the Royal Pharmaceutical Society in 2002. I started to get more involved a few years later when, as Chair of the London Museums of Health and Medicine network, I helped to develop the 3 day History of Medicine course, particularly with curators, archivists and librarians of historical medical collections in mind. I've been on the Faculty Executive Committee since 2015, and President since earlier this year.

MF: Share with us how you programme the courses?

My joint course director, Professor Stuart Anderson and I, were approached by the Faculty to explore the option of a pharmacy history course about 5 years ago. Stuart and I had worked alongside each other on the British Society for the History of Pharmacy committee for more than a decade, and jumped at the chance to design a course that would be stimulating and wide-ranging. My museum background inspired our approach of including as many collections-based sessions in the programme as possible, and we have been very lucky to work with colleagues at the Wellcome Library, Royal College of Physicians, Royal Pharmaceutical Society and at Apothecaries' Hall to create a course that is hosted at all 4 organisations. The varied programme concentrates on British pharmacy history, setting it within themes including the history of laboratory science, medicinal botany, the British Empire, the pharmaceutical industry, and professionalism.

We approached some of the leading experts in the field to speak, including Tilli Tansey, Pratik Chakrabarti and Anna Marie Roos, and it is great to hear their lectures in person. We also have a strong thread running through the course about sources and resources to support pharmacy history research at all levels. The talks are interspersed with sessions looking at historical prescription records, pharmaceutical rare books, a tour of the RCP medicinal garden, of the RPS Museum and of Apothecaries' Hall. It can be an intense 3 days with lots to absorb, but hopefully no dull moments!

MF: What do you hope people will gain from taking these courses?

This will be the third time that we've run the course, and previously people have thoroughly enjoyed the broad mixture of topics, the chance to visit some of the key pharmacy history collections in London, and also the discussions with such an interesting range of people, both speakers and other delegates. The previous years have attracted a fantastic mix of practising and retired healthcare professionals, students working on allied topics, writers and journalists, and people with a general interest in the topics. Being able to share your views on topics familiar and new with such a diverse group is a benefit that most people haven't thought about when they book to attend. Of course, I also hope that people will be inspired to carry on - or start - investigating an area of pharmacy history that features on the course.

MF: What are you working on next?

As historian and Honorary Lecturer for the School of Pharmacy at Cardiff University, I've got a busy few months coming up as we celebrate 100 years of pharmacy education in the city. I've been researching and writing a book on the centenary for the last 5 years, so I'm looking forward to seeing it in reality in the autumn. I've also got articles and talks lined up to link with and support a great programme of events around the actual anniversary on 8th October. I'm most looking forward to a "Step Back in Time" day when all 400 pharmacy undergraduates will be having a day of classes based on the 1919 curriculum, many devised by me.