**Medical Humanities – Power and Piety**

This course was not my first choice, but in the end I loved it. I went into it with a vague feeling that medieval history might be quite interesting, and a definite awareness that it fitted into my timetable and did not involve giving any Pecha Kucha presentations. I was expecting a lecture-driven course, with a little bit of background reading, but the reality was very different: the lectures were interesting, but I spent most of my time preparing for tutorials and researching my final essay.

The amount of time this course takes is really up to you. There is a one hour lecture and a one hour tutorial each week. The tutorial is obligatory, and part of your mark comes from your attendance and contribution. The tutorial is a group discussion of primary sources (contemporary documents), which form the basis of one of the assessed written pieces. You need to read the sources beforehand, so there is a lot of set reading, but you can be selective about how much to read in depth. The assessed written pieces for the course are a 1,000 word source review and a 3.000 word essay. The source review is fairly quick to produce, but how long writing the essay takes is up to you: you can write on a topic from the set list, or choose an area of interest related to medicine and health in the medieval period. Getting really stuck in to researching your own topic is very rewarding, but time-consuming!

The weak point of the course was definitely the lectures: the quality varied, and they were generally not relevant to the assessed work for medical students. They also tended to focus on the agricultural and economic side of medieval life, which is not always as interesting as the battles and dramatic events discussed in the primary source tutorials.

I enjoyed this course a lot, and would recommend it to anyone interested in medieval history. Most especially, don’t be put off if you are interested in history but did not enjoy studying it at school. I was dreading writing a history essay, and was really surprised by how much I enjoyed the research, and how proud I was of the finished product. The academic staff on the course were great, and very willing to help find sources for the essay and give feedback at the end of the course. It is not a medicine oriented course, but I actually found that was one of the good things about it: mixing with students from other disciplines provided a nice break from the hothouse atmosphere in Suttie, and the main campus is gorgeous! Additionally, if you want to keep a medical angle to your work, you have the freedom to choose a medical topic for your essay – it’s a bit of extra work, but well worth the effort.