Monastic Sciences: Medicina, Mechanica, Philosophia
8–9 May 2015

The religious of medieval Europe were in a privileged position for studying humanity’s interaction with the natural world, whether this was considering the nature of celestial bodies and the cosmos, or deepening their pharmaceutical knowledge to aid patients in the infirmary. This conference asks what unique contributions the religious made to the applied arts and learned disciplines, how their religious vocation coloured their observations, and how this knowledge was applied to their community and wider society.

We seek papers on the following areas:

- The place within religious life of medicine, technology, philosophy and natural philosophy
- Development of medical theory and practical care in religious communities
- The definition and legitimisation of learned arts, e.g. magic and alchemy
- Material culture and archaeology of artes medicinae/mechanicae within religious life
- Representation of activity pertaining to natural philosophy in religious manuscripts and art
- Religious conception and expression of humanity’s relationship with the non-human world
- Comparison of medieval religious and secular understanding of scientia, medicina, artes mechanicae, philosophia, philosophia naturalis, physica.
- Encouragement and promotion to study artes of any kind within religious communities
- Reception and diffusion of ars medicina/mechanica/magica/philosopha/physica within religious communities
- Historiography of medicine, “sciences” and the natural world within medieval religious life

We are also delighted to announce our keynote speakers: Prof. Peregrine Horden (Royal Holloway), who will discuss religious life and medicine, and Dr Sophie Page (UCL) who will explore magic as a learned discipline within monastic life.

This event will be held over two days at the University of Leeds. We welcome contributions from postgraduates and early-career researchers of all disciplinary backgrounds. Interested parties should send a 300 word abstract for a twenty minute paper to leeds.monasticism@gmail.com.

Alternative proposals for one-hour sessions, such as joint papers or panelled debates, are most welcome. Proposals should be submitted no later than 27th February 2015. For more information please see leedsmonasticismconference.wordpress.com.