



Seminar

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Medicine and the Seven Deadly Sins in Late Medieval Literature and Culture

Tuesday, 17 March, 11:15 a.m.

In the Thunberg Lecture Hall
SCAS, Linneanum, Thunbergsvägen 2, Uppsala
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S W E D I S H
C O L L E G I U M
for ADVANCED STUDY

ABOUT VIRGINIA LANGUM

Virginia Langum received her Ph.D. in English from the University of Cambridge (2011), where she has also been Donaldson Bye-Fellow at Magdalene College. Prior to that, she earned her bachelor's degree in English from Trinity College Dublin, a master's degree in Journalism from Columbia University, New York, and a master's degree in Medieval and Renaissance Literature from the University of Cambridge. After a teaching fellowship at Wolfson College, Cambridge, she became a Postdoctoral Fellow at Umeå University and part of the Umeå Group for Premodern Studies in 2011. She has also worked as a journalist.

Langum has published articles on medieval literature, religion and the body. Most recently, she edited *Words and Matter: the Virgin Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Parish Life*, forthcoming with *Runica et Mediaevalia* this spring, and is currently editing *Visions of the North in Premodernity*, forthcoming with Brepols in 2016.

During her stay at SCAS, Langum is also working on her monograph 'Medicine and the Seven Deadly Sins in Medieval Literature and Culture' and the work presented at the seminar is part of this monograph. The book examines medical and naturalistic explanations of the sins in late medieval discourse.

ABSTRACT

This research explores medieval understandings of the interaction of medicine and morality, with a focus on English texts. In the wake of reforms in the thirteenth century, confession placed a greater emphasis upon the circumstances of sin – priests are required to know the particulars of both the sins and the sinners, including some physiological knowledge. At the same time, influential medical materials were being circulated and translated, inflecting religious language and thought about sin's relation to the body and raising vital questions: how best is the relationship of medicine, physiology and the sins best understood? What is the correlation of the sins and the passions? What is the relevance of the "natural" and "unnatural" in relation to the sins and what is at stake for human responsibility? This talk will briefly describe the key ideas and texts involved in the project before considering two specific sins as case studies.