

ESRC Quota Application Statement

Proposed MA: History of Medicine

Following on from studies looking at the gendering of psychiatric space, my PhD will examine conceptions of space and time within medicine in general between 1914 and 1945 within Europe. This was a period in which great technological and cultural changes, as well as two world wars, led to complex developments in both medicine and in conceptions of the nature of space and time. Much has already been written on these areas as discrete topics (Kern, 1983, Shorter, 1997), but I wish to examine the interplay between the two areas. Using a multidisciplinary approach, including theories and practices from spatial anthropology and cultural studies, I intend to reconstruct responses to medical spaces, as well as attitudes towards ideas of a medical past and future. At the centre of this study lies a discussion of where the human body was situated within space and time, and how this affected the manner in which it was treated. Noteworthy aspects of this development include a shift towards the laboratory rather than the clinic as the major site of medical innovation, and the substantial increase in somatic approaches within psychiatry. Ultimately, this would be a PhD concerned with social experiences rather than cultural reflections: I will look at how people actually experienced medical spaces, how people related to personal and general medical histories, and how people interacted within new medical environments. This study will necessitate a wide variety of historical and academic approaches; close textual and visual analysis will be essential, as well as the ability to 'read' conceptions of space and time into medical histories. One key question, however, remains paramount: what did these complex changes within medicine mean for twentieth-century society? This PhD will be ideally suited to the Centre for the History of Medicine at the University of Warwick, whose overarching aim of 'situating medicine' ties in perfectly with this PhD's interest in the 'where' and 'when' of twentieth-century medicine. Dr Mathew Thomson, with his background of researching and teaching inter-war medicine and culture, will be perfect for supervising this PhD.