



UCLA Programs in Medical Classics

2003 - 2004

UCLA Programs in Medical Classics is a series of presentations designed to enhance an appreciation of the links among famous medical writings, clinical practice, basic research, and humanistic scholarship. Six times a year these meetings bring together a convivial group of individuals of scholarly tastes—both from the community and from UCLA faculty, students, and staff—for a lecture and an opportunity to discuss and examine texts and topics that embody the history of advances in medicine, as well as the relations of medicine to broader cultural settings.

<http://www.library.ucla.edu/biomed/his/medicalclassics.html>

Tuesday, 21 October 2003, 6:00 p.m.

“The Decline of Science” in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Babbage and Birkbeck Revisited

Dorothy Porter, Ph.D.

Professor of History of Health Sciences, Department of Anthropology, History and Social Medicine, University of California, San Francisco

Introduction by Margaret Jacob, Ph.D.

Professor of History, UCLA

This paper will illustrate the contrasting worlds of radical medicine and radical natural philosophy in the early nineteenth century and their influence on the public understanding of rational knowledge and professional practice in Britain. It will cross-examine Charles Babbage’s text on *The Decline of Science* with Dr. George Birkbeck’s campaign to democratize science through the creation of educational institutions for artisans, the Mechanics Institutes. The paper will discuss how Birkbeck’s role in the establishment of competitive medical schools in early nineteenth-century London enabled him to construct an alternative strategy to that of Babbage in the pursuit of the Enlightenment goal of the dissemination of useful knowledge.

This subject fits into Dr. Porter’s broader interest in the history of medicine education which she is examining in the development of social medicine as an academic discipline and its influence upon transforming medical curriculum. The paper will be of special interest to those concerned with early nineteenth-century political radicalism, natural philosophy and medicine but will also appeal broadly to social historians of medical, scientific, as well as British culture.

This program will begin at 6:00 pm in the UCLA Faculty Center, followed by wine & soft drinks, conversation, and an opportunity to examine some of the books discussed that evening as well as related material from the Biomedical Library’s History & Special Collections Division. There is no charge for the lecture and reception.

An optional dinner with the speakers, at \$22.00 per person, will take place in the Faculty Center about 7:30 pm. A reservation is required for dinner; please call the History & Special Collections Division of the Louise Darling Biomedical Library at (310) 825-6940 to make a reservation.

An abridged form of an appropriate text will be distributed by snailmail to those persons who request it in advance. To request this text or more information, please send Teresa Johnson <tgj@library.ucla.edu> an e-mail, including your name and address, with the words “**Medical Classics Program: October 2003 Lecture**” in the subject line; or call the History & Special Collections Division at (310) 825-6940.