

Institute of the History of Medicine
The Johns Hopkins University
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MARY E. FISSELL

Education

PhD History and Sociology of Science, University of Pennsylvania, May 1988.
MA History and Sociology of Science, University of Pennsylvania, May 1984.
BA History, University of Pennsylvania, May 1981.

Research Interests

Early-modern science and medicine; the patient's perspective in the history of medicine; gender, sexuality, and the history of the body; popular culture; books and reading in early modern England and the Atlantic world.

Positions Held

July 2023-June 2024, Interim Director, Department of the History of Medicine, The Johns Hopkins University.
Sept. 2022 - present, Inaugural J. Mario Molina Professor in the History of Medicine,
May 2005 - Aug 2022, Professor, Department of the History of Medicine,
Department of the History of Medicine, Johns Hopkins University. Hopkins University.
July-Dec. 2013, Interim Director, Department of the History of Medicine, The Johns Hopkins University.
Nov. 1994 - May 2005, Associate Professor, Department of the History of Science, Medicine, and Technology, Johns Hopkins University; additional appointments in the History and History of Science Departments.
Jan. 1992-Oct. 1994, Assistant Professor, Department of the History of Science, Medicine, and Technology, Johns Hopkins University.
July 1988-Dec. 1991, Lecturer and Research Associate, Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine, University of Manchester.

Additional Professional Roles

Fall, 2020, Curator, "Picturing Pandemic Baltimore" photography exhibition, <https://tinyurl.com/ppbalt>.

June-Nov 2020, WHO Western Pacific Region COVID-19 “Futures” think tank.
January 2019, Marie Jahoda Visiting Chair in International Gender Studies, Ruhr
Universität, Bochum, Germany.
Jan 2016-present, Project Organizer, Reading Early Medicine (REM),
digital humanities project (with Elaine Leong, MPIWG Berlin).
Jan 2014-July 2020, Director, Online Program in the History of Medicine, The Johns
Hopkins University.
Jan-July 2013, Visiting Fellow, History and Philosophy of Science, Cambridge
University.
Jan 2012-present, Life Member, Clare Hall, Cambridge University.
Jan-July 2011, Visiting Fellow, Clare Hall, Cambridge University.
Jan-July 2011, Co-Curator, *Books & Babies*, exhibit, Cambridge University Library,
Cambridge, England. <http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/exhibitions/Babies/index.html>;
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-14110843>.
Sept 2006-April 2007, Director, Folger Seminar, “Vernacular Health and Healing”,
Folger Shakespeare Institute, Washington, DC.
Jan. 2006-July 2021, Co-Editor, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*.
1996-99, Section Editor, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, “Women and
Medicine”.
2024-present, President, American Association for the History of Medicine.

Publications

Books

Patients, Power and the Poor in Eighteenth-Century Bristol, Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 1991.

Manchester Women's History Group (six member group including Mary Fissell),
Resources for Women's History in Greater Manchester, Manchester: National
Labour History Museum, 1993.

Vernacular Bodies: The Politics of Reproduction in Early Modern England, Oxford:
Oxford University Press, 2004. [<http://www.oup.co.uk/isbn/0-19-926988-2>].
Paperback edition, Fall, 2006. See Forum on *Vernacular Bodies*, *Journal of
Women's History*, 22 (3), 2010: 185-213.

Pushback: The 2500-Year Fight to Thwart Women by Restricting Abortion (New
York: Seal/Basic, 2025) Published in the UK as *Abortion: A History*, (London:
Hurst). Reviews, see: [https://www.telegraph.co.uk/books/non-fiction/review-
mary-fissell-abortion-history/](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/books/non-fiction/review-mary-fissell-abortion-history/); TLS: [https://www.the-tls.com/history/abortion-a-
history-mary-fissell-book-review-elizabeth-abbott](https://www.the-tls.com/history/abortion-a-
history-mary-fissell-book-review-elizabeth-abbott); PW: [https://
www.publishersweekly.com/9781541604070](https://www.publishersweekly.com/9781541604070), etc.

Articles. (ORCID: 0000-0002-4141-3966)

- "The Sick and Drooping Poor' in Eighteenth Century Bristol", *Social History of Medicine*. 1989; 2(1): 35-58.
- "The Disappearance of the Patient's Narrative", in Andrew Wear and Roger French, eds., *Medicine in an Age of Reform*, London: Routledge, 1991: 92-109.
- "Charity Universal: The Founding of the Bristol Infirmary", in Lee Davison, et al., eds., *Stilling the Grumbling Hive: Debates on Social and Economic Problems in England 1698-1740*, Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1992: 121-144.
- "Readers, Texts and Contexts: Vernacular Medical Works in Early Modern England." in Roy Porter, ed., *The Popularization of Medicine 1650-1850*, London: Routledge, 1992: 72-96.
- "Health in the City: Putting Together the Pieces." *Urban History*. 1992; 19 (3): 251-56.
- "Innocent and Honourable Bribes: Medical Manners in Eighteenth-Century England." in Robert Baker, Dorothy Porter and Roy Porter, eds., *The Codification of Morality: Historical and Philosophical Studies of the Formalization of Western Medical Morality in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, Dordrecht: Kluwer Press, 1993: 19-45.
- "Eighteenth-century Medical History." *Eighteenth Century Life*. 1995; 19(2): 98-102.
- "Gender and Generation: Representing Reproduction in Early Modern England", *Gender and History*, 7 (1995): 433-456. Reprinted in *The Sexualities in History Reader*, ed. Kim Phillips and Barry Reay, London: Routledge, 2001.
- "Constructing Vermin in Seventeenth-Century England", *History Workshop Journal*, no. 47 (1999): 1-29. Reprinted in *Identity and Alterity*, ed. William Chester Jordan and Angela Creager, Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2002.
- and Kathleen Coyne Kelley, "Virtuous Bodies: Constructing a History of the Hymen", in *Attending to Early Modern Women*, ed Jane Donawerth and Adele Seef, College Park: University of Maryland Press, (2000): 96-98.
- "Hairy Women and Naked Truths: Gender and the Politics of Knowledge in *Aristotle's Masterpiece*," *William and Mary Quarterly* 60 (2003): 43-74.
- "Making a Masterpiece: The *Aristotle* Texts in Vernacular Medical Culture." in Charles E. Rosenberg, ed., *Right Living: An Anglo-American Tradition of Self-Help Medicine*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, (2003): 59-87.
- and Roger Cooter, "Exploring Natural Knowledge: Science and the Popular in the Eighteenth Century", *Cambridge History of Science*, vol. 4, *Science in the*

Eighteenth Century, ed. Roy Porter, Cambridge University Press, (2003): 145-179.

“Making Meaning from the Margins: The New Cultural History of Medicine.” John Warner and Frank Huisman, eds., *Medical History: The Stories and their Meanings*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, (2004): 364-89.

“The Politics of Reproduction in the English Reformation.” *Representations* 87 (Summer 2004): 43-81.

“The Marketplace of Print” in Mark Jenner and Pat Wallis, eds. *Medicine and the Market in England and Its Colonies*, London: Palgrave, (2007): 108-132.

“Introduction: Women, Health, and Healing in Early Modern Europe”, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 82 (Spring 2008): 1-17.

“The Doctor-Patient Relationship”, Robert Baker and Lawrence McCullough, eds., *The Cambridge History of Medical Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (2009): 501-17.

“Healing Spaces”, in Laura Lunger Knoppers, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Early Modern Women’s Writing*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

“Going Vernacular”, *Journal of Women’s History*, 22 (3), (2010): 209-213.

“Popular Medical Books”, Joad Raymond, ed. *Oxford History of Popular Print Culture, vol 1: Beginnings to 1660*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011): 418-431. Volume is winner of the Sixteenth Century Society and Conference (SCSC) Bainton Literature Prize.

“A Book of Receipts of All Sorts: Elizabeth Strachey, 1693-1730s”, in Michael Sappol, ed, *Hidden Treasure*, (New York: Blast Books, 2012): 204-5.

“Women and Medicine.” in *Oxford Bibliographies in Renaissance and Reformation*, Ed. Margaret King. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

“Material Texts and Medical Libraries in the Digital Age”, *RBM a Journal of Rare Books Manuscripts and Cultural Heritage*, (2014): 135-145.

“Remaking the Maternal Body in England, 1680–1730”, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, Vol. 26, No. 1, January 2017, 114-139.

“Man-Midwifery Revisited”, in *Reproduction: Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. Nick Hopwood, Rebecca Flemming, Lauren Kassell, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018): 319-332.

- “*Aristotle’s Masterpiece*”, in *Reproduction: Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. Nick Hopwood, Rebecca Flemming, Lauren Kassell, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018): 672.
- with Jeremy Greene et al, editor, Special Issue on COVID-19, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 94:4 (2020).
- with Jeremy Greene, et. al., “Introduction”, Special Issue on COVID-19, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 94:4 (2020): 543-561.
- with Guido Alfani, Mary Augusta Brazelton, et. al., “History as a Partner In Public Health: A Report of the Foresight Think Tank on the History of Pandemics”, WHO.
- with Suzanne Bell, “A Little Bit Pregnant? Productive Ambiguity and Fertility Research”, *Population and Development Review* vol. 47:2 (June 2021): 505-26.
- Sally Pezaro, Karen Maher, and Mary Fissell, “Midwives Need a Useable Past to Shape their Future”, *The Lancet*, vol. 399, issue 10329, p.1046-1047, March 12, 2022, DOI:[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(22\)00231-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(22)00231-8).
- with Elizabeth Atkins, “Marking Maternity: Integrating Historical and Archaeological Evidence for Reproduction in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries”, in *The Material Body: Embodiment, History and Archaeology in England, 1700-1880*, ed. Elizabeth Atkins and Karen Harvey, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2023): 47-80.
- Kelly O’Donnell and Lauren MacIvor Thompson, “Interview With Mary E. Fissell”, *History of Pharmacy and Pharmaceuticals*, 65:2, (2024): 190-8, doi:10.3368/hopp.65.2.190.
- “Reproducing Ballads,” in *Early Modern Medicine: A Source-Centered Introduction*, ed. Olivia Weisser, (London: Routledge Press, 2024): 276-293. DOI: 10.4324/9781003094876-20.
- “Prying in the the Secrets of Nature: Reading Aristotle’s Masterpiece,” in *Sources and Methods in the History of Sexuality*, ed. Anna Clark and Elizabeth Williams, (London: Routledge, 2024): 91-101.

Forthcoming/In Press:

- “Medicine, Science, and Magic,” in *The New Cambridge History of Britain, Volume 5: 1500-1750*, ed. Susan Amussen and Paul Monod, (Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, 2025).

"Pigeons and Blasphemy: Tracing Abortion in Colonial Courtrooms," *The Nursing Clio Reader*, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2025).

Non-Peer-Reviewed Articles

"Women and Water". *Women's Health in Primary Care*. 1998; 1(1): 110.

"Domestic Consumption". *Women's Health in Primary Care*. 1998; 1(2): 198.

"The Birth of Gossip". *Women's Health in Primary Care*. 1998; 1(3): 298.

[and subsequent monthly columns to March 2001]

Recent Outreach, Podcasts, etc.

May 2020, "Pandemics Come and Go. The Way People Respond to Them Barely Changes." *Washington Post*, May 7, 2020. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2020/05/07/coronavirus-bubonic-plague-london/>

Nov. 2020, "Aristotle's Masterpiece: Early Modern Sex Ed", Historical Perspectives On Contemporary Issues, CHSTM, <https://www.chstm.org/earlymodernsexed>

Dec. 2020, BBC History Extra, "The History of Medicine: Everything You Wanted to Know"
<https://www.historyextra.com/period/modern/history-medicine-medical-everthing-you-wanted-know-podcast/>

Feb. 2021, JHU SAIS European Alumni meeting: "The Pandemic in Global Historical Context"

March 2021, JHU DAR Women's History Month Talk: "Call the Midwife: Sarah Stone, Eighteenth-century Midwife"

Sept. 2021, "Making Babies in the 17th Century", *Not Just the Tudors*, podcast, <https://play.acast.com/s/not-just-the-tudors/makingbabiesinthe17thcentury>

Feb. 2022, BBC History Extra, "Periods, fertility & childbirth: a pre-modern history", <https://shows.acast.com/historyextra/episodes/periods-fertility-childbirth-a-pre-modern-history>

Nov. 2022, "Cesarean Section Surgery in 16th Century England", That Shakespeare Life, <http://www.cassidycash.com/ep238>

March 2025 "The Witch Hunts of Abortion Providers: How Reproductive Care Became a Crime" Ms. Magazine 3/10/2025 <https://msmagazine.com/2025/03/10/history-abortion-criminalization-witch-hunts-excerpt-pushback-the-2500-year-fight-to-thwart-women-by-restricting-abortion/>

May 2025, "Talk Nerdy to Me" Podcast <https://www.carasantamaria.com/podcast/mary-fissell>

May 2025 “Politicising Abortion in the United States” *History Today* <https://www.historytoday.com/author/mary-fissell>

Reviews

Book reviews in *Isis*, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, *Social History of Medicine*, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, *Medical History*, *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences*, *Journal of British Studies*, etc., etc.

Conferences (last 5 years)

Organized panel, “Digital Tools for Teaching Early Medicine to a New Generation,” AAHM, May 2021.

Organized panel, “Publication and Patient Privacy: A Round-Table on Editorial Practice” AAHM, May 2021.

Speaker, WHO Western Pacific Region COVID-19 “Futures” Conference, August 2021.

Presentation: “Print, Pills, and Promotion in Seventeenth-Century London”, AAHM, May 2022.

Co-organized “Roe v. Wade at 50” workshop and public panel, The Johns Hopkins University, March 2023.

Commentator: “Art and Abortion,” 2 sessions, Association for Art History, London, England, 2023.

Panelist, “Bringing Local History to Local Reproductive Justice Activism,” National Women’s Studies Association Annual Conference, Baltimore, MD, Oct. 2023.

Invited Presentations (last 5 years)

March 2020, “Before Sex Ed”, Center for the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine, Philadelphia.

March 2022, “The Extraordinary Affair at Walworth: An Abortion Provider in 19th Century London”, Delbert McQuade Distinguished Lectureship in History, Juniata College, Huntingdon, PA.

March 2023, “Abortion and the Reformation: Women, Witchcraft, and Repression” University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

April 2023, “The Long View”, Abortion History Workshop, Exeter University, Exeter, UK.

April 2023, “Abortion and the Reformation: Women, Witchcraft, and Repression” Montclair State University, Montclair, NJ.

March 2024, “Regulating Reproduction in the Early-Modern Atlantic World,” Howard. F. Mahan Lecture, University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL.

April 2024, “Re-thinking Abortion in 17th Century Anglo-America,” Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA.

April 2024, Panelist on “The Vital Role of the Arts and Humanities in Public Health:

Reconceiving the Sexual and Reproductive Body”, Washington University, St. Louis, MO, see [here](#).

- June 2024, “Bluejays and Footballs: Vernacular Abortion Knowledge in 1950s Baltimore,” Institute for Historical Research, London, England.
- November 2024, “Blue Jays and Footballs: Abortion in 1950s Baltimore”, American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology webinar, <https://www.acog.org/education-and-events/webinars/bluejays-and-footballs-abortion-in-1950s-baltimore>
- November 2024, “Savin, Sex, and Scandal: Rethinking Abortion in Early Modern England,” Plenary Address, North American Conference on British Studies, Denver, Co.
- December 2024, “The Politics of Quickening in 1830s Britain,” invited speaker, Sacred Embryology conference, Yale University, New Haven, CT.
- March 2025, “Lurkydish: Re-Thinking 17c Reproductive Control”, Oklahoma University, Norman, OK.

Grants and Awards

- 1992-93 Course development grant, Hughes Foundation.
- 1997-8 Fellowship, Shelby Cullom Davis Center for Historical Studies, History Department, Princeton University.
- 1997 Fellowship, American Council of Learned Societies (declined).
- 2000 Fellowship, Folger Institute, Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC.
- 2001-2002 Grant, National Library of Medicine (NIH 1 G13 LM07054-01).
- 2005 *Vernacular Bodies*, Honorable Mention, Katharine Briggs Folklore Award.
- 2010-2012, Grant, National Library of Medicine (NIH 1G13LM010198-01).
- 2023 Discovery Grant, The Johns Hopkins University, \$100,000.
- 2023 Teaching Improvement Grant, The Johns Hopkins University, \$12,000.

University Service

- Medical School Admissions Committee, 1992-1995.
- Medical School Admissions Screening Committee, 1996-1998.
- Medical School Council, 1995-1999.
- Dean's Teaching Fellowship Selection Committee, 1993, 1995, 1998.
- Women's Studies Faculty Board, 1995-2000, 2014-15.
- Organized departmental colloquium series. 1992-1993, 1996-1997, 1999-2000.
- Organized series of outside speakers on "Women, Medicine and History", funded by Hughes Foundation. 1992-1995.
- Consultant, Mary Garrett website, Chesney Archives, 2003-5
- Chair search committee, Chinese Medicine, 2004.
- Chair search committee, Early Medicine, 2005-6.
- Member, search committee, 2011-12.
- Professionalism Sub-Committee, Curriculum Reform, 2004-6.

Co-Director, Scholarly Concentration, designed, implemented, and taught medical school program in history of medicine. 2009-2012.

Chair, Website Committee, oversaw planning and design of new department website. 2013-14.

Director, Online Program In the History of Medicine, 2014-2020. Directed creation and implementation of new online program, including accreditation, curriculum development, administration, and pedagogy.

Member, PhD COVID Relief Fellowship Selection Committee, 2021-2.

Professional Societies and Service

Member: American Association for the History of Medicine; American Historical Association; North American Conference on British Studies.

Honorary Secretary, Society for the Social History of Medicine (U.K.), 1990-1992.

Article Prize Committee, Berkshire Conference of Women in History, 1993-97.

Program Committee, American Association for the History of Medicine, 1996.

Osler Prize Committee, American Association for the History of Medicine, 1996, 1999.

Shryock Prize Committee, American Association for the History of Medicine, 2003, chair 2005.

Education and Outreach Committee, American Association for the History of Medicine, 2003-6.

Advisory Board member, H-Sci-Med-Tech, 2006-present.

Jameson Prize Committee, American Historical Association, 2009.

Chair, Dan David Prize Committee, "Past", 2021.

Referee for *American Historical Review*, *William and Mary Quarterly*, *Medical History*, *Social History of Medicine*, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, *Gender & History*, etc.

Referee for university presses including Yale, Oxford, Chicago, Manchester, etc.

Referee for Wellcome Trust, Hannah Foundation, Philadelphia Area Consortium in the History of Science, ACLS, Folger Institute, Huntington Library, Research Triangle; Institute for Advanced Study, Advanced Study, etc.

Vice-President, president-elect, American Association for the History of Medicine, May 2022-2024

Chair, Task Force on the Future of Meetings, American Association for the History of Medicine, May 2023-25

Vice President, then President, AAHM, 2022-present.

Courses Taught

Undergraduate:

Humans and Animals, 1993, 1996.

History of Modern Medicine, [undergraduate course team-taught with Dr. Harry

Marks], 1996, 1997, 2001, taught solo 2003, 2006.
History of Medicine: Antiquity to the Scientific Revolution, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2019, 2021.
Health and Healing in Early-Modern England, 1993, 1996.
Making Monsters: The Natural History of the Unnatural, [team-taught with Dr. Gabrielle Spiegel & Dr. Ruth Leys], 1994.
Women and Medicine, 1993, 1994, 1995, 2002.
Medicine and Magic, 1993.

Graduate:

A History of the Early Modern Body, 1994.
History of Modern Medicine, [team-taught with Dr. Harry Marks], 1992, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 99, 01, 03, taught solo 2006.
History of Medicine: Antiquity to the Scientific Revolution, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2019, 2021, 2024.
Online Survey 1: Classical Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages 2016, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2022.
Online Survey 2: Medicine from the Black Death to the Scientific Revolution, 2016, 2018, 2020, 2022.
Online Introduction to the History of Medicine, 2016; 2017, 2018.
Online Research Practicum, 2017, 2019.
What is the Cultural History of Medicine (Science and Technology)?, 2002.
An Introduction to Historical Methods, 1998, 2005, 2007.
Popular Knowledge, 1993, 1999, 2003, 2006.
Colonial Knowledge, 2008.
Medicine from Patients' Perspectives, 1992, 1995.
Issues in Early Modern Medicine, 2004, 2006, 2008.
Online Program Methods in the History of Medicine, 2020.
The Work of Healing: Medicine and Materiality, 2020, 2025.

Medical School:

Social History of the Patient (PAS 2 selective), 1995, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2000.
Historical Perspectives on Gender, Race and Medicine (PAS 1 selective), 2003, 2004, 2007, 2008.
Scholarly Concentration in the History of Medicine 2009-2010

Mentoring

Advisees:

Nyssa Strottman, MA 1994, currently practicing law.
Susan Ferry, PhD 2003.
Maggy Brown, 1992-1996, deceased.
Trudy Eden, 1992-1998, completed PhD with another advisor 1999, associate professor, Northern Iowa State University.
Kathleen Crowther, PhD 2000, associate professor, University of Oklahoma.
Shoshanna Green, 1993-96.

Alexa Green, PhD 2007, nursing school.
Allison Kavey, 1999-2003, completed PhD with another advisor 2003, assistant professor, John Jay College of Criminal Justice.
Manon Parry, MA 2002, Assistant Professor, University of Amsterdam.
Massimo Petrozzi, PhD 2010, Archivist, The Computer Museum, Mountain View, CA.
Melissa Grafe PhD 2009, Director, Cushing-Whitney Medical Historical Library, Yale University, CT.
Nick Stanzo MLA 2004.
Olivia Weisser PhD 2010, associate professor, U Mass Boston.
Barbara Chubak MA, MD 2007; assistant professor, Einstein College of Medicine, NY.
Lisa Boulton, PhD 2014.
Alicia Puglionesi, PhD 2014, writer and independent scholar.
Katherine Arner, PhD 2014, History Department, Park School, Baltimore.
Seth LeJacq, PhD 2016; assistant professor, Hunter College.
Claire Gherini, PhD co-supervised with History Dep't 2016, assistant professor, Fordham University.
Brooke Lansing Mai, History Dep't, PhD 2023, post doc JHU.
Michelle Silva, MA 2022.
Paul Child, MA 2023, prof. Sam Houston State.
Chris Sloffer, MA 2023.
Anna Weerasinghe, PhD 2023, working in communication, Washington DC.
Katarina Sawtelle, MA 2025
Cole Giller, MA 2025
Emily Clark, student.
Sheridon Ward, co-supervised History Dep't, student.
Trine Tsouderos, MA student.
Ryan Falk, MA student.
Julie Lemmon, MA student.