

# ROBERT HOOKE, “MECHANICK GENIUS,” AND MASCULINE ABILITY

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**Thurs Jan 24th 2019 3pm - 4.15pm @ KUY 410  
DEPT OF ENG UHM**

This talk focuses on writings by and about the Restoration scientist Robert Hooke to analyze how modern forms of technology and gender were mutually defined across the long eighteenth century. Hooke was known for his design and use of scientific instruments: in particular, the microscope, which he popularized with his bestselling collection of microscopical observations, *Micrographia* (1665). I show how Hooke's theorization of these instruments in *Micrographia* articulates a new form of masculine ability premised on the interdependence of body and technology, a form for which his own body acted as a kind of public experiment. I then trace how the “Mechanick Genius” Hooke embodied proved a resilient model for English masculinities in the context of intensifying global exploration and colonial exploitation.

**Reception with light refreshments to follow.**

## WHO

EMILY WEST'S SCHOLARSHIP ON EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LITERATURE, MATERIAL CULTURE, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY IS DRIVEN BY QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW INTIMACIES BETWEEN SUBJECTS AND OBJECTS ENABLE NARRATIVES OF PROGRESS THAT ENTRENCH MODERN FORMS OF INEQUALITY. SHE HAS PUBLISHED ON TOPICS INCLUDING LITERARY TECHNOLOGIES OF MECHANIZATION IN THE BRITISH COTTON TRADE, EPISTOLARITY AND GENDER FLUIDITY IN JOHN CLELAND'S *MEMOIRS OF A WOMAN OF PLEASURE*, AND THE ANIMAL MATERIALITY OF CHILDREN'S IVORY ALPHABET TOYS.

## WHAT

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT COLLOQUIUM PRESENTATION BY APPLICANT FOR THE LONG 18TH CENTURY POSITION