The boundaries between literature and science in Renaissance Italy were famously porous. Renaissance writers reflected on the origins of disease, and linked it to various phenomena including moral virtue, architectural form, geographical place, astrological conjuncture, and even the discovery of the New World.

In this course we will explore a number of key late Renaissance literary texts, many of them written by physicians, that reflected on bodily health and the causes and cures of disease. Texts will include Marsilio Ficino's Book of Life, Girolamo Fracastoro's epic poem Syphilis, Girolamo Cardano's Book of my Life, and Alvise Cornaro's La Vita Sobria.