



## KEYNOTE ADDRESS

### **The Poor, the Public, the Polity, and the Pools: Medical Care at the Seventeenth-Century British Spa.**

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#### **Abstract:**

Although most scholars tend to associate spa cures with the sociable bathing routines of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century elites, I argue that it was in the seventeenth century – when spa cities made concerted efforts to offer free medical care to all people, regardless of their socioeconomic status, race, religion, or gender – that spas served as relevant, critical spaces for large portions of the British population. In this period, many different kinds of people sought natural spring cures in the hopes of treating many different kinds of diseases, injuries, and ailments. And spas existed around all of Britain and its early colonies, in both well-known metropolitan sites such as Bath and Tunbridge Wells, and in locations such as Moffat Wells (Scotland), Swadlingbar (Ireland), and Bath (Jamaica). Using evidence from a diverse range of sources, including records culled from city corporation minutes, as well as early printed medical pamphlets and casebooks, and personal papers, I will show how spa city governments, spa patrons, and spa practitioners each encountered the water cure.

#### **Biography:**

Amanda E. Herbert is Associate Director at the Folger Institute of the Folger Shakespeare Library, where she runs the Fellowships Program. She holds the Ph.D. in History from the Johns Hopkins University, and is the author of *Female Alliances: Gender, Identity, and Friendship in Early Modern Britain* (Yale, 2014) winner of the Best Book Award from the Society for the Study of Early Modern Women. She edits *The Recipes Project* and is a co-director for *Before 'Farm to Table': Early Modern Foodways and Cultures*, a \$1.5 million Mellon initiative in collaborative research; as part of this project she is co-curating an exhibit at the Folger in 2019, "First Chefs: Fame and Foodways from Britain to the Americas." She is at work on her second book project, *Water Works: Faith, Public Health, and Medicine in the British Atlantic*.