This seminar examines early modern European modes of knowledge-production by zeroing in on the idea of the “elemental.” From geometry to medicine and alchemy, almanacs and handbooks of prognostication to natural history (including colonial natural history), the Newberry’s collection includes books that deploy the notion of an “element” (and the “elemental” or even the “elementary”) in many different ways. We will emphasize the four traditional elements (earth, water, fire, and air), gaining an overview of premodern European categories of material knowledge. Held in conjunction with the “Renaissance Invention” exhibition and the symposium, “Elemental Forces,” (May 7-9), students in the course will have the opportunity to present their research in a workshop meeting with visiting scholars.

Enrollment is limited, by competitive application. The application deadline is November 1, 2019. Complete this online application form to apply: https://www.newberry.org/renaissance-center-graduate-seminar-application.

SCHEDULING NOTE: There will be a two-week break during the seminar. Class will NOT meet March 19 and 26, but will reconvene for the final class on April 2.