Sex and the erotic famously occupied a central place in early modern Japanese culture, capturing the imagination of writers, painters and print-makers; but it also drew the attention of physicians, quacks, healers and lay health-seekers. In this talk, I examine sexuality as a health and disease concept for men in early modern Japanese medical and popular culture (1600-1868), going beyond the dichotomy of sex as fertility and/or pleasure. Normative notions of gender roles and masculinity, of household and family all played a part in constructing medical notions of sexual pathologies and, conversely, a healthy’ sexuality for men. Through a discussion of a range of widely circulating popular health cultivation manuals and other medical texts, but also lay diaries, vernacular fiction and advertisements for patent medicine, the talk reveals the tensions and competing attitudes which surrounded sexuality, from the viewpoint of both the medical expert and the lay public.

Dr Angelika Koch specialises in the culture of early modern Japan, with a particular focus on gender, sexuality and the body. She completed her PhD at the University of Cambridge in 2014 and is in the process of completing her first monograph Sexual Healing. Sexuality, Health and the Male Body in Early Modern Japan, a cultural history tracing medical views of sex as a health and disease concept in the Edo period (1600-1868). Beyond this, she has co-edited a series of student research on genders and sexualities in contemporary Japan (Manga Girl Seeks Herbivore Boy. Studying Japanese Gender at Cambridge, LIT 2013 and Cool Japanese Men. Studying New Japanese Masculinities at Cambridge, LIT 2017). Moreover, she is also part of the collaborative project Timing Day and Night: ‘Timescapes’ in Pre-modern Japan, which explores time as a set of social practices prior to the introduction of the Western time system, and has contributed to the Kronoscope 17/1 Special Issue: Time in Historic Japan (3/2017). Following academic appointments at the University of Tokyo and Yale University, she is currently a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Ghent.

All are welcome // Monday, 12 February, 2018 // 5-7pm

Rooms 8/9
Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies
Sidgwick Avenue, Cambridge CB3 9DA
For further information email: fs468@cam.ac.uk

The Japanese Studies Group gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation towards this seminar series