The IMC seeks to provide an interdisciplinary forum for the discussion of all aspects of Medieval Studies. Papers and sessions on any topic related to the European Middle Ages are welcome. At the IMC 2016, sessions and papers on the special thematic strand ‘FOOD, FEAST & FAMINE’ are particularly encouraged.

Proposals should be submitted online at: www.leeds.ac.uk/ims/imc/imc2016_call.html
The online proposals form will be available from 31 May 2015. Paper proposals must be submitted by 31 August 2015; session proposals must be submitted by 30 September 2015.

Special Thematic Strand: FOOD, FEAST & FAMINE

Food is both a necessity and a marker of economic and social privilege. Who cooks food, who consumes it in the Middle Ages? How and what did people from different social levels or religious commitments eat? How did eating change? How were these issues contested and represented? What does food reveal about differing aspects of medieval society and culture?

The aim is to cover the entire spectrum of famine to feast through multi-disciplinary approaches. Study of the medieval economy raises issues about standards of living and nutritional health. Both archaeological as well as textual evidence have been used to explore crop yields, agricultural methods, transport problems, death, and famine. Geographical and social variations in diet are important for understanding medieval taste and the era’s definitions of sufficiency and luxury. Food is an expression of international relations and trade, as shown in the intercultural influences between Christian Europe and Islamic Spain, North Africa, the Eastern Mediterranean, and India.

Across medieval Europe the acquisition, preservation, and storage of food was a struggle for much of the population, but food consumption was also a means for a clerical and noble elite to display taste and ostentation. In popular culture, feasting is perceived as one of the major activities of the medieval elite. The religious significance of food and fasting in the Middle Ages was part of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish practice. Fasting and food had wide-ranging interconnections with piety and charity, and could involve renunciation of an exceptional intensity. Spiritual and physical nourishment and its absence can be explored in many disciplines from the theological, legal, and literary to the art historical and linguistic.

Areas of discussion could include:

Agricultural systems
Almsgiving – food as charity
Changing tastes
Cookbooks and cooking practice
Death and famine
Drink – wine, ale, and water
Environmental contexts
Feasting
Food and social class
Food in monastic and other religious communities
Food production
Food supply and population
Food supply and transport
Fresh and saltwater fish
Hunting
Medical ideas of food, digestion, and humoral pathology

Medieval haute cuisine
Religious and spiritual feasting and fasting
Spices and other edible luxury trade items
Standards of living
Symbolic/figurative food
Trading food