Human Skin in Early Modern Europe: From Blushing to Branding

Membrane and marker, source of protection and site of vulnerability, human skin was invested with profound meanings and was the site of distinct cultural practices in early modern daily life. Skin's place was fundamental, but not unchanging. The early modern centuries established an overarching, enduring emphasis on the skin's color as the essential marker of human difference, but many other aspects of skin were critical to this period as well: blushing and the use of cosmetics; tattooing and scarification; as well as practices such as circumcision and branding. This lecture will focus on the social use of the skin to signify through blushing and through branding, two contrasting aspects of the history of skin in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Thursday, November 14, 2013
5:30 p.m.
Helen DeVitt Jones Auditorium
The Museum of Texas Tech University