Before the rare earths that invisibly shape and fuel your cell phone and hybrid car - minerals of costly environmental extraction and recondite names - the elements were simple: as simple, shifting, complex and storied as earth, wind, fire, and air. Together with other iconic foursomes (seasons, humors, continents) the elements organized the premodern universe, animated myth, required iconography. Drawing on recent efforts to think “with” the elements in ecocriticism, this workshop will be a group exploration of the impact of the elements on premodern cultural production. We seek to expand elemental thinking beyond purely ecocritical or materialist concerns to include topics, texts, and objects in literary studies, history of art and architecture, and history and philosophy of science. How did earth, air, fire, and water combine to order-or disorganize-materiality, bodies, space, or texts? How did they foster, temper, or block new experiences of scale or configurations of matter? What does it mean to approach a literary text or cultural artifact through its engagement with the elements? How did elements express national or gender affiliations? What were the relations between elements and affect? To get at these questions, we will bring together an exciting group of scholars across different disciplines for a set of public talks and group work sessions.

Featuring:

**“Wet Cartesianism”**
Daniel Selcer
Philosophy, Duquesne University
March 24, 9:45 AM - 10:30 AM

**“The Dream of the Water-Men”**
Lowell Duckert
English, West Virginia University
March 24, 11:45 AM - 12:30 PM

**“Rivereuse: Water, Residency, Gender”**
Katherine Ibbett
French/Early Modern Studies, University College London
March 24, 2:30 PM - 3:15 PM

This workshop is co-sponsored by a collaborative research grant from the Humanities Center, by the Medieval and Renaissance Studies Program, and by the Department of French and Italian, with the further support of 18th-Century Studies at Pitt, the Department of English, and the Cultural Studies Program.

For more information, please email the workshop organizers, Jennifer Waldron (jwaldron@pitt.edu) and Chloe Hogg (hoggca@pitt.edu).