Prof. Lawrence Principe

Title: Alchemy in the Modern Laboratory

Abstract:

Over the past few decades, alchemy has gone from being a misunderstood subject, outcast from serious study, to an important and vibrant part of the history of science. Part of this transformation has come about by taking more seriously the practical experimentation and theories of the alchemists and trying to reproduce their processes in the chemical laboratory. This lecture will recount several examples of how laboratory recreations can be used as a tool for historical understanding, revealing the remarkable talents and achievements of these early experimenters, the origins of their often-bizarre language and imagery, and how they turned their observations into theories about the world.