Saltbox Science: Alchemy, Medicine, and the Household in English Colonial America

My research approaches early English colonial science from the perspective of the household, arguing that New England colonists especially adapted to new circumstances in their towns by practicing “saltbox science,” a form of knowledge-making and scientific practice in colonial saltbox homes increasingly divergent from European forms. I use the household of Gershom Bulkeley (1635/6-1713), a significant figure in New England, as a vehicle to explore this science as well as its primary alchemical and medical elements. Previous scholars have mainly studied Bulkeley’s political pamphlets, but these brief polemics are only a marginal part of his substantial collection of manuscripts. Using these manuscripts and recently discovered texts, I focus on the rooms, research, and practices within Bulkeley's home to exemplify this saltbox science.