



HONORS SEMINAR PROPOSAL FORM

**For guidelines concerning seminar proposal, please refer to the "Seminar Policy."*

**Please attach a copy of your current c.v.*

About the Instructor

Name: Anna Kathryn Grau (Schmidt) Title: Lecturer
Department: Theatre & Music/Honors Email: annagrau@uic.edu

If you are not a faculty member at UIC, please explain the professional expertise in the field of your proposed offering:

I am a part-time faculty member at UIC; I have previously taught a core course (Love Songs) in the Honors College, and courses in the Department of Theatre & Music. I have a PhD in History of Music, with a specialization in music of medieval Europe.

1. **Seminar Title:** The Book before Print
2. **Seminar Description (please provide a clear summary of the proposed course in 250 to 500 words.)**

Before the printing press, no two books were the same. Each book was copied by hand, custom made for a particular use or individual patron. Individual books contained unique combinations of literary, musical, artistic, religious and scientific content, that can tell us not just about their content, but about the places, people and institutions that created and used them.

This course will examine the history of the codex before the advent of the printing press, and what these books have to tell the modern observer. We will consider the production, use, reception and afterlives of manuscript books, focusing on examples from the Middle Ages. Students will be introduced to the fields of codicology and paleography, and will see how these fields can be put into dialogue with history, literature, art, music, religion, and science. Course readings and class discussions will explore the process and economy of book-making before mass production, functions of books in the Middle Ages, and the use of medieval books as primary sources in a variety of historical fields. Brief practicum assignments will allow students to interact with digital facsimiles to try their hands at transcribing medieval texts and describing manuscript images.

In addition, "The Book Before Print" will offer students hands-on experience not found in traditional classes. As an introduction to the material, the class will visit the Newberry Library to view a selection of actual medieval artifacts in person; this will be combined with exposure to a larger selection via online facsimiles. In order to fully engage with medieval bookmaking processes, students will then complete a group project that will involve creating their own codex, including ruling "parchment," copying texts, illustrating their work, and binding the finished product. As an exercise in interpretation of such works, they will then use the books produced by other groups as the basis for a short response paper.

3. Course outline with major topics (with sub-headings, if necessary) and distribution of hours (should add up to 15 hours).

Topic

Hours

Unit 1: Making the Book

In this unit, students will be introduced to the physical aspects of the early book, through a combination of readings and videos, as well as in-class demonstrations and examples. Students will acquire codicological terminology to be used in the rest of the class, as well as discuss the importance of material aspects in discussing the function and content of books

1. Materials (parchment, ink, quills):

1

We will investigate the production of writing materials, including methods for producing parchment, vellum and paper, and how the look and feel of writing substrates tells us about the relative expense and effort involved in producing manuscripts. We will also look at tools for writing, including the ingredients used in medieval inks.

2. Preparation (pricking & ruling)

1

We will look at a number of examples of medieval manuscripts via online digitized sources to examine how medieval copyists prepared the writing substrate for their work, including tools used to “prick” and “rule” the writing substrate, creating frames and lines for writing. This will include discussion of the variety of layouts used in medieval books, and the uses to which they might be put.

3. Binding (folding, sewing, foliation)

1

This hour will focus on the assemblage of medieval books, including folding the material into bifolios and quires, numbering pages, and various methods of sewing books together with bindings. We will discuss how binding techniques inform us about the layers of use of a given manuscript. If it can be arranged, this may include a visit from a local book artist.

4. Patronage & bookselling

1

This hour will focus on the economy of book production in the Middle Ages, including monastic scriptoria, private patronage and commissions, and the beginnings of the commercial book trade.

Practicum 1: Description of manuscript page

Students will be assigned pages in high-quality online digital facsimiles. Using the terminology acquired thus far, they will write up a codicological description of the page, including evidence of pricking and ruling, substrate quality, foliation, etc.

Visit to Newberry Library

1

We will view several examples of medieval books in person to get a better sense of the variety of sizes, layouts and bindings. (A class visit costs \$100, which could be paid for out of the \$1000 research funds)

Unit 2: Writing the Book

In this unit, students will look closer at the medieval page. We will use online galleries and some excerpts from paleographical and art historical works to get a sense of the evolution of medieval writing and illustration.

1. Scribal practice

1

In this section, I will introduce scribal methods for copying books, including the use of exemplars. We will discuss the implications of this for transmission of medieval texts.

2. Medieval scripts 1
Students will get an overview of the variety of medieval textual scripts (handwriting styles), and will practice transcribing some of them into modern text.

3. Manuscript illumination 1
We will examine illustrations that accompany texts in many medieval manuscripts, and discuss how they relate to the associated texts. We will consider how the choice of image and some of its details can tell us about the creator's perspective on the text, and the traditions they draw upon.

Practicum 2: Paleography exercise

For this assignment, students will be assigned a selection of brief manuscript sections (a few lines each) in three different common medieval scripts. They will transcribe them into modern type.

Unit 3: Filling the Book

In this unit, students will receive a brief introduction to genres of medieval writing preserved in books. Reading assignments will be drawn from primary sources in translation.

1. Types of medieval literature 1
A reading will introduce students to a selection of common medieval literary genres. In class, we will discuss some examples, and their intended audiences, with a focus on narrative romance.

2. Medieval music and religious texts 1
We will discuss examples of medieval musical and religious works in more detail, including their material aspects, such as dimensions and copying requirements. We will consider the audiences and uses of these works.

3. Medieval scientific texts 1
A selection of medieval scientific texts will be examined in more detail. We will consider what might constitute a scientific text in this period, and how they may have been used.

Practicum 3: Research exercise

The third brief practicum will require students to do some research on an assigned medieval book, including describing its contents and what is known about its use and provenance.

Project 1: Codex (group project)

In groups, students will create their own codex, including pricking and ruling "parchment," selecting and copying texts, illustrating their work, and binding the finished product. Work on the codex may be divided, with some students functioning as scribes, illustrators, binders, etc.

Unit 4: Deciphering the Book

In this unit, we will discuss in more detail the evidence handwritten books offer modern scholars, and what can be learned from the material object. Discussions will be based on scholarly articles and examination of digital facsimiles.

1. Attribution 1
We will discuss the attribution of medieval texts, to both authors and scribes, that survive in manuscripts, as well as the prevalence of anonymity in these works. We will also consider the role of the commissioning patron in the creation of medieval books.

2. Miscellanies & anthologies 1
Many medieval texts survive in combination with a variety of other texts, so we will consider what the unique combination of texts in a given book can tell us about its history.

3. Marks of use 1

In this class, we will look at examples of marks of use in medieval books, including marks of ownership, marginal comments, and even doodles and dirt.

4. Afterlives 1

In the final hour, we will consider how medieval books survived (or didn't), and how they ended up in modern libraries such as the Newberry. This will lead us to consider what we have, and what we have lost.

Practicum 4: Description of manuscript

In a brief response paper, students will examine an assigned full manuscript available online and provide an account of its physical makeup, contents, and marks of ownership based on their own observations.

Project 2: Analysis

Students will select one of the books created by another group for Project 1, and will analyze the codex, using visual clues to reconstruct the group's process of preparation, binding and copying. They will analyze the contents of the book and describe the likely interests and concerns of the group that created it. This will allow students to explore the ways a handmade book as material object may tell us about its creators and audiences without needing the level of paleographic and language skills required for an in-depth analysis of a medieval manuscript.

4. List required/suggested texts and/or readings and show how they relate to the topics covered in class. In all instances, give author, title, and date of publication. Provide complete bibliographic information if possible.

Central texts:

Clemens, Raymond, and Timothy. Graham. *Introduction to Manuscript Studies*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/cat/bib/6656830>.

"Quill | Books before Print." Accessed March 24, 2015. <http://www.bookandbyte.org/quill/>.

"Leaves of Gold Learning Center Mainpage." Accessed March 24, 2015. http://www.philamuseum.org/micro_sites/exhibitions/leavesofgold/learn/index.html.

Sample additional readings:

Making the Book:

Special Collections Conservation Unit, Yale University Library. "Medieval Manuscripts: Binding Terms, Materials, Methods, and Models." Accessed March 24, 2015. <https://travelingscriptorium.files.wordpress.com/2013/07/bookbinding-booklet.pdf>.

Writing the Book:

Parkes, M. B. *Scribes, Scripts, and Readers: Studies in the Communication, Presentation, and Dissemination of Medieval Texts*. London, U.K. ;Rio Grande, OH: Hambledon Press, 1991. (excerpts)

Filling the Book:

Scanlon, Larry, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Literature 1100–1500*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. (excerpts)

Deciphering the Book:

Taylor, Andrew. *Textual Situations: Three Medieval Manuscripts and Their Readers*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002. (excerpts)

5. Please explain what tools you plan to use to help students engage the materials and cultivate their critical thinking, and the standard for evaluating student performance in a pass/fail grading system.

In this course, I will cultivate critical thinking through class discussion of medieval manuscripts and what they can tell us about the people who made and used them. They will examine their assumptions about the Middle Ages, literacy and the materiality of the book. I will also help students to engage with the materials by emphasizing hands-on projects, including experience handling actual medieval manuscripts and applying some elements of medieval book production. Finally, they will combine these two approaches by applying their critical thinking skills to an analysis of books created by their peers.

In order to pass the course, I expect students to attend and participate in class regularly. They must also submit a complete version of all practicum assignments: brief practicum assignments will allow students to interact with digital facsimiles to try their hands at transcribing medieval texts and describing manuscript images. Because this kind of work will be new to students, the practicum assignments will be assessed primarily on completion. The two “projects” will be assessed in more detail. In groups, students will create their own codices, including ruling “parchment,” copying texts, illustrating their work, and binding the finished product. Groups will be given a rubric listing essential elements for their book. Groups will also submit a very brief write-up describing their individual roles in the production of the book, and their process. Based on the book and write up, students will be assessed on their participation in the group, and their use of book-production techniques discussed earlier in the class. As an exercise in interpretation of such works, they will then use the books produced by other groups as the basis for a short response paper. This paper will be assessed on correct application of terminology and analytical techniques used in class readings and discussions. Thus, in order to pass the class, each student must (1) attend and participate consistently, (2) complete all practicum assignments, (3) contribute to the essential elements in the “codex” group project and (4) write a short response paper that correctly applies at least four key codicological terms or techniques.