

Mst in Medieval Studies – Options for 2019-20

Candidates should note, when choosing the sequence of their Options, that a given subject may only be available in one of the two terms, and that options available vary from year to year, depending on the availability of teaching staff.

Language Options available next year:

- (Medieval) Latin
- Old English
- Old Norse
- Old French
- Old Occitan
- Old High German
- Middle High German
- Old Irish
- Middle Welsh
- (Byzantine) Greek
- Possibly Arabic – please get in touch if this is what you want to study. Likewise for Hebrew.

Palaeography:

- English Palaeography
- Latin Palaeography
- Modern Languages: Palaeography, History of the Book and Digital Humanities. (NB: those taking the Modern languages option may wish to sit in on the Latin Palaeography classes, in order to get some extra transcription practice) – this can be streamed for French or German.
- Optional additional class (for those who are interested): Arabic palaeography and epigraphy (some knowledge of Arabic is required). Convened by Dr Umberto Bongianino

Option Courses (further details are on following pages):

German:

- Middle High German Courtly Literature (MT) Professor Almut Suerbaum
- German Literature and the Beginnings of Printing (HT) Professor Henrike Laehnemann
- Women's Writing in Medieval Germany (MT) Professor Annette Vulfin

French:

- Brief Encounters: Medieval Short Narratives (HT), Prof. Burrows
- Women and Medieval Literature (HT), Prof Marnette

Italian:

- Problems in Dante Interpretation (MT, HT) Professor Elena Lombardi
- Biography and Autobiography in the Italian Renaissance (HT) Professor Simon Gilson
- Tradition and Innovation in Medieval Lyric Poetry (HT) Professor Francesca Southerden

Spanish

- Myth, History, and the Construction of Identity in Medieval Iberia (MT, HT) Professor Geraldine Hazbun

English:

- Chaucer before the Tales, (MT), Professor Vincent Gillespie;
- Old English Poetry, (MT), Dr Daniel Thomas
- After the Conquest: Reinventing fiction and history, (MT), Professor Laura Ashe
- Old Norse, (HT), Professor Heather O'Donoghue;
- Age of Alfred, (HT), Professor Francis Leneghan
- The Pearl Poet, (HT), Professor Helen Barr
- Devotional texts & material culture, (HT), Dr Annie Sutherland

History:

- Saints and Sanctity in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, (HT), Prof. Conrad Leyser
- The Twelfth-Century Renaissance, (HT), Prof. Matthew Kempshall
- The Global Middle Ages, (HT), Prof. Catherine Holmes

Music:

- Thirteenth-Century Motets: Collecting, Composing, Performing and Notating, (MT), Dr Matthew Thomson
- Gender and Sexuality in Medieval Music, (MT), Prof. Elizabeth Eva Leach

Art History:

- Timor mortis conturbat me: death, commemoration and visual culture in the late Middle Ages, (HT), Dr Cathy Oakes

Archaeology:

- The Archaeology of Western Europe in the Early Middle Ages, (MT), Prof. Helena Hamerow

Further information about the option courses (not all courses publish further details).

Women and Medieval Literatures

Convenor: Professor Sophie Marnette

Although most medieval texts were seemingly written by men and some of them with a fairly misogynistic bias, women were absolutely central to Medieval French Literature. The focus of this course will be twofold. In the first place, it will examine gender issues and women's status in the work of French medieval women writers (such as Marie de France and Christine de Pisan). In the second place, it will envisage the place of women in male-authored texts, whether as characters, patrons or addressees of lyric poems. A reading list for this course is available on the [French MSt/MPhil Programmes page](#) of the Faculty website

Brief Encounters: Medieval Short Narratives

Convenor: Professor Daron Burrows

Short narrative forms have been much less studied than their longer counterparts (the *roman* or *chanson de geste*, for example), but are the locus for significant experimentation with and development of storytelling practice. This course considers a range of genres, in both verse and prose, to explore modes of storytelling, and the specificities of their brevity, across *lais*, fabliaux, exemplary literature (including fables and miracles), and *nouvelles*. You will also study the presentation and circulation of tales in manuscript compilations. A reading list for this course is available on the [French MSt/MPhil Programmes page](#) of the Faculty website

Women's Writing in Medieval Germany

Convenor: Professor Annette Volting

Women's writing in this period consists mostly of mystical revelations, (auto)biographical writings and religious poetry. Important areas of study that have now firmly established themselves in the literary canon are the *Fließendes Licht der Gottheit* of Mechthild von Magdeburg, the 'Nonnenviten' - lives of nuns from S.W. German Dominican convents – and devotional writing. The course offers scope for the investigation of questions of genre, public and private dimensions of literature, the reception of women's writing, as well as gender-specific aspects of female authorship. The course is planned on the basis of German texts, but it is also possible to study this option on the basis of a combination of Latin and German material

Middle High German Courtly Literature

Convenor: Professor Almut Suerbaum

Courtly literature in medieval German spans the period from Lambrecht's Alexander c. 1160 to the Minnesang of the later 13th and early fourteenth century. The course centres around Veldeke's Eneide, the romances of Hartmann, Wolfram and Gottfried with the option to look also at poetry. Students are encouraged to tackle new texts not covered in their earlier studies, and to approach the texts with a diversity of methods ranging from more traditional literary approaches to gender issues and cultural history.

German Literature and the Beginnings of Printing

Convenor: Professor Henrike Lähnemann

This subject is devised to open up an area of literary history that has received little attention, the German texts whose reception spanned the manuscript culture of the period 1440-60 and continued in the new medium after the invention of printing. The course addresses both medium-related issues such as the invention of printing with moveable type, wood-block printing and intermediate forms between manuscript and print, as well as providing scope for an investigation of the historical and social background.

Problems in Dante Interpretation

Convenor: Professor Elena Lombardi

All of Dante's works pose challenges to the reader and have led to diverse, often conflicting critical and scholarly interpretations. This course offers the student the opportunity to concentrate on central issues in the *Divina commedia*, but also to look at other works if desired. Problems that will be given particular attention include allegory, imagery, dating, and Dante's sources.

Tradition and Innovation in Medieval Lyric Poetry

Convenor: Professor Francesca Southerden

Italian lyric poetry of the 13th and 14th century displays a remarkable talent for innovation which is carried out through constantly assimilating and reassessing ideas and techniques of preceding generations. Students will have the opportunity to examine the work of major figures from the Sicilians to Petrarch, including Dante and the *stilnovisti*, and also, if they wish, to explore lesser known names, such as the 13th-century Guittonian or contemporaries of Petrarch such as Antonio da Ferrara

Myth, History, and the Construction of Identity in Medieval Iberia

Convenor: Professor Geraldine Hazbun

This course will examine the re-imagining of the past in medieval epic and chronicle, with a view to exploring the ways in which the literary reconfiguration of history in these texts shapes the identities of their day, comprising ethnicity, gender, proto-nationalist sentiment, and religious affiliation. Close attention will be paid to the literary strategies which underpin the transformation of history, and to the creative interchange of history and myth. With close reference to the rich cultural background and political history of medieval Iberia, the course will also seek to understand the ideological foundations of the reconception of history.

Timor Mortis

Convenor: Dr Cathy Oakes

This class will explore the visual manifestations of late medieval practices connected with death and negotiating the afterlife, through devices such as chantries, the cult of saints, good works, and methods of commemoration in general. This will lead us to explore the design of chantry chapels, shrines, reliquaries, and tombs as well as noting the ways in which benefactors tried to ensure they were not forgotten. We will take every opportunity to use resources in Oxford such as William Wykeham's foundation at New College, the cult of Frideswide in the Augustinian abbey church which is now Oxford cathedral, and illuminations accompanying the Office of the Dead in some of the Bodleian's extensive collection of medieval Primers or Books of Hours.

Global Middle Ages

Convenor: Prof. Catherine Holmes

This course is structured around two key questions: what can the study of global history bring to our understanding of the Middle Ages, and what can the study of medieval history bring to the evolving field of global history? Those taking the paper will be able to enhance their understanding of medieval history by thinking more about the history and culture of regions beyond Europe during medieval centuries, about parallels and contrasts between the approaches and evidence bases used by scholars of extra-European and European history in the centuries between 500 and 1500, and about the most productive ways to conceptualise that thousand-year period in global terms.

Saints and Sanctity

Convenor: Prof. Conrad Leyser

Saints, alive and dead, played a central role in medieval society. This course examines the emergence of the cult of the saint in late Antiquity, and its remarkable spread over subsequent centuries. Live saints reinforced the Christian message and helped the faithful with the travails of daily life, but also represented a challenge to the authority of the established Church. Dead, their cults and their relics spread through the Christian world, encouraging, in a few notable cases, a steady stream of visitors to their graves.

This course is centred around the rich, diverse, and often beautifully written hagiography of the fourth to ninth centuries, both from the Mediterranean region and from northern Europe. It offers an opportunity to examine, across several centuries, a wide range of themes: the fascination with martyrdom; different types of sanctity (such as those available only to bishops, or to women); the role of the saint within society and within the Church; the emergence of different styles of asceticism and spirituality, from Byzantium to Ireland; how a saint was acclaimed and accepted in a period without formal processes of canonization; the extraordinary power of relics, and the attraction of pilgrimage; the often underhand 'translation' of holy bodies; and, finally, even the existence of doubters.

Twelfth-Century Renaissance

Convenor: Prof. Matthew Kempshall

The Twelfth-Century Renaissance is an interdisciplinary paper in intellectual history designed to give students a broad overview of the content and applications of learning in the twelfth century. It therefore covers a wide range of different curricular subjects from the perspective both of their sources (the classical textual tradition of ninth-century learning; the impact of newly translated texts; the consequences of personal contact with Muslim and Jewish scholars in Sicily and the

Iberian peninsula; the influence of empirical discovery) and of their application through cathedral schools and royal courts to society at large. The course comprises eight classes, organised around the seven liberal arts (the trivium and the quadrivium) and the three higher faculties of the medieval schools.

1. An introduction to modern historiography on the subject, from C.H.Haskins through to Richard Southern, Beryl Smalley and Stephen Jaeger.
2. The trivium part I (an introduction to Aristotle and Cicero on the subjects of dialectic and rhetoric; the controversy over their relationship as highlighted by John of Salisbury's *Metalogicon*).
3. The trivium part II (an introduction to grammar and, in particular, to the forms of poetry and historiography through which it was studied; the controversy over the relationship between history, 'fiction' and fable which developed as a result of the emergence of vernacular romance).
4. The quadrivium (an introduction to the subjects of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music, concentrating in particular on Platonism and the 'school' of Chartres as exemplified by William of Conches' *Dragmaticon*).
5. Theology (the impact of the liberal arts on the systematic study of theology, starting with Anselm and Abelard and continuing through Peter Lombard to the school of Saint Victor).
6. Law (the systematisation of canon and Roman law and its impact, via Gratian and Bologna, on the exercise of both ecclesiastical and temporal authority).
7. Medicine (the influence of Galen at the 'school' of Salerno and its relationship both to astrology and to medical practice).
8. The 'mechanical' arts, focussing in particular on architecture and navigation and their respective relationship to cathedral-building and the use of the astrolabe.

After the Conquest: Reinventing fiction and history

Convenor: Professor Laura Ashe

This course will consider the dramatic literary developments of the post-Conquest period, in terms of the cultural, political, and ideological challenges of Norman England. It will include the birth of the romance genre, the development of fictional narrative, and of life-writing, and the emergence of such cultural phenomena as chivalry, written interiority and individuality, and the elevation of heterosexual love. Texts considered will include many written in Latin and French (which can be studied in parallel text and translation), as well as Middle English; genres include foundation myths and pseudo-histories; chronicles and epics; lives of saints, knights, and kings; insular and continental romances and *lais*, such as the various versions of the Tristan legend, the Arthurian romance, and the romances of 'English' history; and devotional prose and lyrics.

Texts are to be chosen by agreement from amongst those listed; the secondary reading lists are inclusive, not prescriptive, and intended to aid in the process of writing the final course essay.

1. Historiography, myth, and *translatio*: Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Historia regum Britanniae*; Wace, *Brut*; *Roman d'Eneas*.
2. Fiction, romance, and the rise of chivalry: Chrétien de Troyes, *Erec*, *Yvain*, *Lancelot*, *Cligès*; *Le Roman des eles* and *Ordene de chevalerie*.

3. History, nation, and the rise of the king: (from) *The Song of Roland*, Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*, *Romance of Horn*, Jordan Fantosme's *Chronicle*, *Lai d'Haveloc*, Layamon's *Brut*.
4. Interiority, selfhood, love, and suffering: (from) Thomas of Britain, *Tristan*; *Ancrene Wisse*; Richard of St Victor, *The Four Degrees of Violent Love*; Middle English lyrics.
5. Life writing: (from) *Vita Ædwardi*, *Life of Christina of Markyate*, *Life of Wulfric of Haslebury*, *Lives of Thomas Becket*; *The History of William Marshal*; *Vita Haroldi*.
6. Developments in romance: (from) Marie de France, *Lais*; Beroul, *Tristan*, and the *Folies Tristan*; *Gui de Warewic*, *Boeve de Haumtoun*; *Havelok*; *King Horn*; *Sir Orfeo*.

Old English poetry: Cynewulf and the 'Cynewulf canon'

Convenor: Dr Daniel Thomas

In the generally anonymous corpus of Anglo-Saxon vernacular ('Old English') poetry, one name stands out: Cynewulf. Four surviving Old English poems bear the 'signature' of Cynewulf (or 'Cynwulf') in the form of runic characters embedded more-or-less seamlessly into apparently autobiographical 'epilogues'. These poems are *Christ II* or *The Ascension* (a poetic account of Christ's Ascension that draws significantly upon a homily of Gregory the Great), *Juliana* (an adaptation of the Latin *passio* of the virgin martyr St Juliana), *Elene* (an account of St Helena's discovery of the true Cross based upon a Latin *inventio* narrative), and *The Fates of the Apostles* (which recounts the missionary activity, and death, of Christ's Apostles). The precise purpose(s) of the autobiographical epilogues and their relationship with the preceding poetic narratives are still matters for scholarly debate, as is the identity of 'Cynewulf' himself, but almost all scholars would admit that the four poems in question stand as a (perhaps partial) record of the career of one particular Anglo-Saxon author.

The survival of this small but impressive body of work provides modern scholars with a unique opportunity to assess in some detail the interests, literary techniques, and poetic style of an individual Old English poet. Cynewulf was clearly not, however, a poet working in isolation. His work stands not only as part of the wider tradition of Old English verse, but also, more specifically, at the heart of a group of surviving poems apparently linked by shared thematic and rhetorical concerns and by the use of a discernibly similar poetic vocabulary and style. Moreover, recent scholarship has increasingly uncovered what look like deliberate echoes (both of theme and lexis) not only within the so-called 'Cynewulf group', but also between these poems and other Old English texts such as *Beowulf* and *Christ I* and *II*.

This course will provide you with critical and analytical ways of approaching the signed works of Cynewulf, assessing their relationship to the 'Cynewulf group' and other poems, and considering the implications of recent scholarship relating to the literary relationships between these texts for our understanding of the Old English poetic tradition. Texts will be studied in Old English, so some prior study of the language is required. If you need to refresh your knowledge of Old English, you might want to look at an introductory guide such as Mark Atherton's *Complete Old English* (London: Hodder Education, 2010) or Peter Baker's *Introduction to Old English* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012). For a more detailed (but still user-friendly) look at how the language works, see Jeremy J. Smith's *Old English: A Linguistic Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

The Old English poetic corpus is small, so it is possible to know it in some detail. Alongside the 'signed' works of Cynewulf, you should try to familiarize yourself with other 'Cynewulfian' poems such as *Guthlac B*, *Andreas*, *The Dream of the Rood*, and *The Phoenix*, as well as *Beowulf*, *Judith*, and *Christ I (Advent)* and *Christ III (Christ in Judgement)*. Parallel text editions such as those produced for the 'Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library' will be particularly useful for this:

The Beowulf Manuscript, ed. and trans. R. D. Fulk (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).
Old Testament Narratives, ed. and trans. Daniel Anlezark (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

The Old English Poems of Cynewulf, ed. and trans. Robert E. Bjork (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

Old English Poems of Christ and His Saints, ed. and trans. Mary Clayton (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013).

Old English Shorter Poems Vol. I Religious and Didactic, ed. and trans. Christopher A. Jones (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

Old English Shorter Poems Vol. II Wisdom and Lyric, ed. and trans. Robert E. Bjork (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).

Full course details will be provided in due course, but please feel free to email me with any questions at the address given above.

Chaucer before the Tales: A Superficial Bibliography for Beginners

Convenor: Professor Vincent Gillespie

A close look at the poems written by Chaucer up to the mid 1380s, including *The Book of the Duchess*, *The House of Fame*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, *The Legend of Good Women*. The course will explore Chaucer's experiments with form and style, and the gradual evolution of his poetic theory. You may also want to look at the translations of Boethius and *The Roman de la Rose*.

Old Norse

Convenor: Professor Heather O'Donoghue

This course is designed to be flexible enough to meet two needs. On the one hand, beginners in Old Norse will be introduced to a varied range of Old Norse Icelandic prose and poetry, and be able to set these texts in their historical and cultural contexts. On the other, those who have already studied some Old Norse will be able to focus on texts directly relevant or complementary to their own interests and expertise.

There will be language classes in Old Norse, and a series of introductory classes on the literature, in Michaelmas Term 2019. These classes are mandatory for anyone who wishes to do the option in Hilary Term but has not done any Old Norse at undergraduate level. Prospective students are very welcome to contact Heather O'Donoghue with any queries.

Age of Alfred

Convenor: Dr Francis Leneghan

King Alfred of Wessex (871-99) has been accused of many things, including the invention of English prose, the Anglo-Saxon kingdom and even the idea of "Englishness". But recent scholarship has

questioned the extent of the king's personal involvement in the so-called 'Alfredian renaissance'. This course will interrogate these issues by exploring the burgeoning vernacular literary culture associated with Alfred's court and its wider impact on English writing and society in the ninth and tenth centuries. Texts will be studied in Old English, so some prior knowledge of the language will be required. Key texts will include the Old English translations of the following works:

- Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Care*
- Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*
- St Augustine, *Soliloquies*
- Psalms 1-50
- Orosius, *Seven Books of History Against the Pagans*

We will also look at other important contemporary vernacular works such as Alfred's Lawcode (*Domboc*), Wærferth's translation of Gregory's *Dialogues*, Bald's *Leechbook* and *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (MS A), and Latin texts such as Asser's *Life of Alfred*, while considering continental influences on Alfredian writing.

Devotional Texts and Material Culture c. 1200-1500

Convenors: Dr. Annie Sutherland (Somerville) and Dr. Jim Harris (Ashmolean)

This C course is intended to function as an innovative exploration of the devotional culture of the Middle Ages, co-taught throughout by Drs. Sutherland and Harris. The considerable and varied literature of the period 1200-1500 will be its primary focus. We will cover a range of texts, from the 13th century *Ancrene Wisse* to the 15th century *Mirror of the Blessed Life of Christ* (given the length of many of the proposed texts, in certain weeks we will recommend that students read selected extracts rather than works in their entirety). However, by combining literary work with the handling of relevant physical objects, we hope to encourage students towards a meaningful appreciation of the materiality of medieval devotional practice. We aim to equip students to read both texts and objects, and to recognise the affinities and disparities between textual and material literacies. All seminars will take place in the Ashmolean's teaching rooms, so as to facilitate access to the objects and images under consideration.

The Pearl Poet

Convenor: Professor Helen Barr

This course will explore a range of critical approaches to the four poems contained in British Library Cotton Nero A.x: *Pearl*, *Patience*, *Cleanness*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. The topics we will discuss will include time and space, gender and sexuality, aesthetics, social environment, and theology.