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M-10: Introduction to Paleography, 800–1500
23–28 July, Charlottesville, Virginia

Narrative Course Evaluations

1) *Were the pre-course reading assignments useful? Are there any readings that you would like to see added or removed in future years?*

1. Extremely—and challenging. I appreciated the updates throughout the summer and felt like I had a really good sense of what to expect.
2. Very useful, but a bit heavy—I was unable to get it all done working full time. We did get them far enough in advance, but my job already requires overtime and I also have some health issues that mean I don't have huge amounts of stamina after work—so it was difficult to get all the reading in beforehand. Then once there—they did divide up the reading, but there was also homework. Some nights it worked well and others I could not get it all done. Also, some of the reading in OHLP was difficult to absorb without enough pictures or instruction—just a few chapters were too much technical detail written in a less accessible way. Others were great.
3. Yes—very helpful. I would have loved to read more of the Clemens + Graham—the OHLP was very helpful in providing background, but we often reiterated the contents in class, whereas the Clemens + Graham covered information (how to do transcriptions, longer list of abbreviations, &c) that we didn't necessarily focus on in class, but that was very helpful to know as we stepped into the classroom each day.
4. I thought the readings were very good and useful, although there were a lot of them and I kind of got caught out after I'd completed the ones for the first week. That's a me problem though.
5. The readings assigned were useful and set the scene for the first day of class. The material in the readings was also expanded upon in class, which made it useful to elucidate any obscure points or difficult paragraphs.
6. The pre-course readings were excellent. They formed a solid foundation for the course topics. At first, I did not understand why we needed the background readings on Roman Cursive and pre-Caroline scripts—as the course proceeded, it was clear that these readings, as well as the others, provided the background for the post- 800CE scripts. Although we didn't go deeply into all of the topics raised in the readings, I felt that the course provided the framework that will make rereading and reevaluating the pre-readings a valuable exercise.
7. As a student with limited experience in medieval manuscripts, pre-course readings were very useful, especially the text by Clemens and Graham entitled "Writing Supports." This text provided a good base-knowledge for entering the course.

8. Yes! The readings were useful and reasonable in length. They were particularly useful for pointing us in the direction of the heavy hitter experts/the big names of the field to be aware of.
9. The pre-course readings were useful: they helped me orient myself and prepared me for what was to come in class. They helped me feel a little more comfortable with what we were doing in class because they anticipated what we were doing in class and I was able to recognize things and make connections. What might be fun or useful would be to provide a reading or interpretation for homework about a manuscript that will be shown in class the following day. The transcription exercises were a great help. All of the hands-on exercises that required engagement and analysis (including those that pushed me out of my comfort zone!) were valuable and contributed to what I felt was tangible improvement in my abilities.
10. Yes—especially the readings from Clemens and Graham. Some of the assigned chapters from OHLP were technical enough that I had difficulty following on my own e.g., the pre-Caroline chapter; the most helpful readings included transcriptions of the pictured texts or isolated letter forms.
11. The readings were appropriate and quite interesting. I will use the bibliographies included to do further reading.
12. If the reading list had been updated a bit earlier, I could have done more ahead of time, which would have helped. That this was my instructor's first year makes perfect sense for this. Also, I would have liked recs on which books to buy versus what to download.

2) *What are your thoughts on the course workbook and/or other teaching materials distributed during class? Was the content appropriate and useful? Will it continue to be useful for you after the course?*

1. The materials were EXCELLENT. I will use these textbooks as bibles (GOSPELS) going forward throughout my graduate education.
2. Resources shared in class were fabulous—so many resources and she explained how to get to them, and we had documentation for finding in the future. I can't say enough about how many tools we learned about and have access to now. It was phenomenal.
3. Yes, super useful! All the handouts are amazing and I have saved physical copies and virtual copies on my computer for future use. Honestly, I'd have loved more cheat-sheets for the scripts—it was so helpful to see the gothic scripts laid out side-by-side.
4. The main textbooks for the course are both essential to the study of the source material and will continue to be important resources both for me and for the students with whom I work.
5. The content was absolutely useful and will continue to be an invaluable reference for my future work.
6. The teaching materials were all valuable and I will continue to use them. If anything, I

would have wished for more.

7. I appreciated that all of the reading materials were uploaded promptly by LFD to the website. She diligently picked out the articles, all of which were extremely relevant and useful. While I realize time is limited, I think it could be useful, moving forward, to devote perhaps 30 minutes of class time to explicitly discuss the readings (much like a graduate seminar) in order to understand popular methodologies and frameworks in the field, which we would naturally then put into practice in the seminar with our manuscripts and fragments.
8. I really appreciated that the course material was all shared digitally (in a Google Drive), rather than in the form of a massive paper packet. This allowed for us to share material with one another more flexibly, and I was grateful to not have to lug around a big binder of material in the Charlottesville summer heat. The syllabus was especially well written and organized, which made it so easy to have a clear sense of the direction the course would take each day. I will certainly continue to refer to the materials in the Drive, especially the cheat sheets on identifying Gothic hands and on how to work through a Book of Hours. These sorts of concise guides can be hard to come by and are invaluable.
9. Yes, the content was appropriate and useful and will continue to be useful. I found that the manuscript speed dating was extremely useful because it allowed me to put into practice what I had been absorbing. I made mistakes in my speed dating, and I find learning from mistakes that I make when practicing to be valuable for my learning and my ability to retain that information long term. I would even suggest having a small section of time every day devoted to speed-dating during the week.
10. Very helpful and useful. I especially appreciated the instruction about digital resources, which will absolutely be of continuous use in the future. The speed dating fragment activities were really fun and excellent opportunities to review and apply new knowledge.
11. The syllabus was most useful, as well as links to databases and websites. I have a great amount of valuable material to consult in my further paleographic studies.
12. Excellent, phenomenal, really wonderful. A pleasure to read; many enduring resources I will use in future.

3) *Which aspects of the course were most intriguing and relevant for you as an individual? Did you walk away with any new insights, ideas, or project plans?*

1. The rationale behind paleographic evolutions were fascinating to me, especially as they mirrored architectural, art historical, and imperial evolutions. I would describe this course as practical, useful and also intellectually stimulating. I gained hard skills (paleography) but also a stronger grounding in the movement of human thinking over time. Paleography isn't just handwriting!
2. Basically the whole thing—I need these skills to catalog in my job—and for my

research— and I am just so much better equipped for both. LFD did such a great job of deciding how much to cover—it was extensive, but not overwhelming. And it was done in a way that we have documentation to go back and practice with and to use going forward. She was very practical in so many ways.

3. On the most basic level, just the ability to read scripts opens up a whole new world of manuscript research, so that was obviously highly relevant. I have also discovered a love of fragments (thanks, LFD!), especially ones used for bindings—I love the idea of matching fragments to their bindings, or looking at ways in which fragments are re-bound or mounted, so that's definitely a project I'd like to pursue in the future.
4. Taking this course really illuminated for me how much more approachable this subject matter is when you're learning it in a group setting. I really felt a strong bond with my classmates and I think the level of cooperation and collaboration in the course really enhanced the learning experience. Since part of my motivation for taking the course involves training student workers in paleography, that's going to be an important thing to remember in the future.
5. The course was really able to condense seven centuries of handwriting into a week, providing the necessary tools to start navigating paleography even to the most inexperienced student. A particularly pleasant insight gained from the course is how open and collaborative the field seems to be, with constant operations of communal or crowdsourced research and contact with other people both inside and outside of the field of paleography.
6. While I had a fairly solid background in medieval Latin scripts from Caroline on, an especially valuable aspect of the course was the place of all scripts, from Roman Cursive through Humanistic, into the respective political, social, artistic, intellectual frameworks, looking at how these aspects influenced the transformation of script over time. It provided the gestalt of paleography, which helped make sense of how we get from A to Z, so to speak.
7. The Latin alphabet construction that we built on our whiteboard as the week went by was a wonderful visual marker for our progress. I particularly enjoyed comparing the various types of Gothic scripts, and our discussion of Humanistic writing. (LFD's vehement dislike of Petrarch was enjoyable to watch—and it was also very justified!).
8. I enrolled in this course because I wanted to be able to read more scripts, but I hadn't anticipated being instructed on how to locate and date manuscripts by their paleography clues, so cool! I never would have imagined gaining this sort of expertise, and I'm excited to continue exercising this skill and using it moving forward to inform my own research.
9. I felt that I've learned something relevant and intriguing in everything we touched on. Particularly being around scholars and experts from other disciplines and fields and forming an intimate intellectual (and friendship) community has been fruitful and generative, and I feel that LFD fosters that kind of community remarkably well.
{private response}

10. Most intriguing for me was the individual fragment activity. I found it an exceptional pedagogical tool that helped us each to apply the skills we were learning in an active way and to pursue fragmentological and codicological research to complement the paleographical tools we had acquired.
11. The progress of scripts, the texts that were transmitted, the historical events that dictated writing styles will provide me with avenues to explore in further research.
12. It's given me an opportunity to re-think my place in academia as a scholar-librarian, I feel it's given me essential grounding to help refocus in a serious way on materials I can work with and publish on at my institution. It showed me I needn't fear going a bit earlier in the period I study.

4) *Did the instructors help you to acquire all the skills and information promised in the course description? Did you learn what you had hoped to learn?*

1. Yes. I am impressed with how much material LFD covered. RBS is a LOT of intensive course work time that at moments felt frustrating in how little time there was for anything else, but I enjoyed how much ability I gained in one week.
2. Yes—and more. I learned more than I thought possible, and again have resources now to keep learning and practicing.
3. Yes, absolutely! I now can mostly read the letters/words in manuscripts, and have accumulated resources for paleographic research. I feel like RBS courses are meant to provide us with a themed toolbox for future research, and this course has absolutely done that!
4. I did, yes. I feel a lot more comfortable with earlier scripts (I see a lot of gothic and humanist texts) and much more prepared to teach students unfamiliar with paleography about what to look for. LFD was a fantastic instructor: she knew the subject matter inside and out but was approachable and enthusiastic throughout, always ready to assure us that we could handle the subject matter and extremely clear on the key takeaways for the course.
5. LFD was a wonderful instructor, both for her extensive and impressive knowledge of the field and for her way of transmitting such knowledge, favoring an inclusive approach over an elitist one, which is not common in the field. The course went above and beyond what was promised in the description and surpassed all my expectations. This course has given me the possibility to further dive into primary sources, making archival research definitely more accessible.
6. Overall, yes. Exploring Roman Cursive and pre-Caroline scripts really helped set the stage for understanding the drive to develop later letter-forms (I had dismissed them as unnecessary to decipher previously). When it comes to Romanesque and Northern Gothic Textualis or Libraria, I would have liked to learn more about differentiating how those scripts differed from England, France, Germany, Austria, Scandinavia . . .
7. LFD's passion for paleography came through without question. She moved through

the materials quickly but effectively. I learned a lot about Carolinian history (which was such a treat) and how said history is captured through scripture. LFD's chronological approach (Pre-Carolinian to Humanism) was wonderful and, for me, made learning scripture very enjoyable. One thing I am still struggling with is geographic identification of scripts: it's hard for me to know whether texts came from Italy, France, &c. by just looking at them. (Perhaps this is something I have to just practice more). Otherwise, I have learned a TON. Additionally, LFD's class has also made me feel more comfortable with Latin, and I look forward to going back to my university to study it further.

8. Absolutely, and then some! I loved how LFD showed us key diagnostic clues that we can use to better identify manuscripts. These details allow us to be more specific in our work, and I feel that I can now draw helpful conclusions about a manuscript without having to exclusively rely on its metadata. I also really appreciated all of the useful online resources LFD pointed out to us. The research resources on her blog are incredibly helpful!
9. I now can look at a manuscript and, through observation, interpret information that provides context for that manuscript. With the experience and knowledge I've gained in this course, I have a set of tools that help firmly ground me not only in the textual aspect of the manuscript, but also in its historical and social contexts. This class has taught me how to observe: what to look for and where to find it. I will leave this course being able to research and read medieval manuscripts with more efficiency and confidence.
10. Yes, and more. I gained exactly the skills I wanted to develop. LFD structured the course with thoughtfulness and guided us through a very complex area with enthusiasm and incredible knowledge/expertise.
11. I learned far more than I thought I would. It's incredible that after a week I can comfortably identify many of the scripts that have existed through the centuries.
12. Absolutely and more. Loved the added context about liturgy, art history, codicology, and how to approach manuscripts. I feel very well prepared to take off and research on my own with a nice baseline to understand terminological differences from my print background.

5) *How do you plan to use the skills and knowledge acquired during your time here?*

1. {no response}
2. 1) To describe, date and localize medieval manuscripts in my library. 2) To read / understand medieval manuscripts I encounter in my research—and to further describe those that have inadequate catalog descriptions to help me see how they fit into my research
3. I'll use the knowledge primarily in my research, as I work in archives and encounter new manuscripts. But I will also use it for teaching, since in my experience,

undergraduates are fascinated with manuscripts but often don't know how to interact with them, and are also wildly attracted to mysteries, so the processes of paleographic research, transcription, and fragmentology will, I think, be wildly appealing to students.

4. A great deal of the project that takes up most of my time in my job involves producing discovery metadata for a vast collection of manuscripts on microfilm, with the help of assistant student catalogers (graduate and undergraduate). Because of the nature of manuscript books, paleography plays a major role in identifying those books, and I feel much more capable of teaching the students what to look for as well as evaluating manuscripts myself.
5. I plan to further my study of paleography by integrating subsequent periods and zoning into my area of interest, so that I may be able to conduct archival research and expand knowledge of unknown and unstudied materials.
6. I plan to take a second, third, and fourth look at my materials and reassess metadata in light of what we have learned.
7. My research interests are quite transhistorical—from Ancient Rome to the early nineteenth century. That said, my Qualifying Exams are coming up, and one of my sections will focus on Medieval Language ideologies regarding Italian, Latin and France. My course on paleography has made me more comfortable approaching manuscripts with writing that I used to find very intimidating. (I still find them a bit intimidating, but less so!)
8. I will apply this paleography knowledge to my dissertation research and beyond. This course has also piqued my interest in the world of book dealers and collectors. Even though I intend on remaining in academia myself, I see the importance of being aware of the book trade (thinking about how materials are acquired by institutions, thinking about the value the word of a trained researcher can have, &c.)
9. I am going to use these skills in my Ph.D. on Middle English literature. I hope to use some of this knowledge to further research the texts of the *Ancrene Wisse*.
10. 1) My own research will be enriched by the ability to consult Latin manuscripts and identify/transcribe/describe them. 2) I now feel empowered to offer my department's graduate students some basic training in Latin scripts, and I can confidently incorporate manuscripts into my own teaching of Latin literature.
11. Both for personal research and for my job. I will definitely be better at describing rare materials.
12. In my cataloging practice, in working with digital humanities resources, and in my own scholarship.

6) *Who might benefit the most from taking this RBS course?*

1. Medieval and Classical researchers, art historians, archaeologists, professors, dealers, sellers.

2. Anyone who works with medieval manuscripts—it is so important in helping you know what you are looking at—collectors, booksellers, catalogers, professors, researchers, librarians, &c.
3. Anyone with an interest in medieval manuscripts should take this course, but especially graduate students in medieval studies or other scholars who are likely to encounter a variety of scripts and will need to be flexible in their knowledge.
4. There isn't enough paleography training in most humanities medieval/early modern studies programs to begin with so anyone who's going to do work with pre-modern texts would benefit—it's important not to depend entirely on editors and to go back to the original sources. Having a handle on paleography makes that kind of research so much more accessible and approachable.
5. I believe that anyone interested in the course may benefit from it, but I would strongly recommend it to any graduate student planning a career in either academia, library science or archival research, because it is a great starting point towards all of these disciplines and could really benefit research by making unpublished materials accessible.
6. Anyone who works in any special collections setting, especially with unexplored or unidentified in situ or ex situ fragments, would benefit greatly from the ability to better date and localize their materials. Any institution with teaching collections of dismembered leaves would benefit.
7. I do think that a knowledge of Latin helps tremendously. Whether you're a student, or simply interested in Medieval Latin scripture, you are sure to gain a wealth of paleographic (and historical) knowledge after taking this course. History students would also very much benefit from this, I believe.
8. Students (of all levels!); catalogers, curators, collectors→ anyone who's work may cause them to encounter books from 500–1500.
9. Any individual who would like to be more proficient at reading and researching manuscripts containing the latin alphabet.
10. I was the only Classicist in the course during this iteration, but I want to emphasize how incredibly useful it was for me. Even though a good deal of the materials weren't immediately relevant to my speciality (Latin literature, first century BCE through first century CE), every single manuscript we examined improved my understanding of Latin scripts and enriched my understanding of the material histories of the texts I do study.
11. Clearly manuscript catalogers, rare book librarians, historians, &c.
12. Catalogers, librarians, educators, medievalists.

7) *If applicable, what were the most powerful, or otherwise noteworthy educational moments in the course? Were there any “aha!” moments you'd like to share?*

1. {no response}

2. So many—the various diagnostic tips. Also she helped us see that you can't just go by catalogs or descriptions—that people make mistakes and that some of this is subjective and not exact—that you can always verify, look, and learn more. And that sharing knowledge and questions with others—is one of the best ways we can move knowledge forward in the field—being open to new interpretations—and being aware of bias or limitations that might have affected older conclusions.
3. I loved when LFD talked through manuscripts with us, especially when she walked us through the Book of Hours research. It was such a powerful demonstration of how research works, as well as an excellent way of guiding us through various online resources (much more memorable than just an info-dump).
4. We just watched everyone in the course give a short presentation on a manuscript fragment, focusing primarily on what its script reveals about it but also looking for codicological/fragmentological clues. It was so cool watching everyone presenting these little pocket histories that we'd all figured out after just five days. Everyone just had so much enthusiasm throughout and LFD was such an amazing instructor—I think you could see all of us just getting incredibly excited about letterforms and as a result everyone kind of built each other up.
5. One of the most powerful moments in the course was realizing how LFD applies the idea and model of collaborative academia and refuses to gatekeep the discipline, fostering an extremely interdisciplinary atmosphere that allowed the class to gain knowledge from many fields. On an academic level, the course really clarified how and why hand and typewriting evolved in the shape we still use nowadays, which was a very interesting process to witness.
6. Working with LFD is always a pleasure. She is a supportive and encouraging instructor and mentor, and the speed-dating of fragments was a very effective means of practicing our skills. Learning from each other was also especially valuable—our group was cohesive, collegial, and congenial from the get-go. This was in and of itself powerful, and LFD set the tone and encouraged the supportive atmosphere.
7. The (somewhat few) times that I got the text and approximate date correct in our speed-dating, I was overjoyed! The speed-dating exercise as a whole was a huge, huge highlight—never stop doing this!
8. I loved getting to see how scripts develop over time both organically and artificially. Throughout the course, we maintained a running record of notable letter forms on our classroom whiteboard, and this practice made the development of whole scripts and individual letter forms so clear. LFD pushed us beyond the course description of 800–500, taking us all the way back to New Roman Cursive and projecting us forward to anticipate the practices of early print. I also adored LFD sharing with us some of her expertise in fragmentology and how this field works together with paleography.
9. N/A
10. Learning how to decipher abbreviations and ligatures. The alphabet board tracing the evolution of letterforms.

11. "Aha!" happened throughout each section of the class. I was invited into a new universe of intellectual and cultural history.
12. Every day—impossible to pick one. This class was a REVELATION!

8) *Are there any other ways in which the course could have been improved?*

1. I would have appreciated a 15 or 30 minute one-on-one session with LFD as part of the course.
2. Can't think of any—it was really great.
3. More Woodclap? Also more spinny wheel. But more seriously—I think it would have been super helpful to create a more detailed version of our whiteboard, maybe online? (I'm imagining a collaborative collage of screenshots of letter forms, ligatures, &c, which would allow us to have entire alphabets saved for comparison!)
4. {no response}
5. Maybe instead of starting at 8:30 a.m. it could start at 9:00 a.m.?
6. I felt that the first three days were rushed. I understand why—a thousand years is a long time to cover in five days! I would have found it valuable to have spent more time on Romanesque and Gothic, as the majority of manuscripts we are likely to encounter are going to come from these periods. This would have allowed us to understand the nuances these scripts can provide, whether it be dating or localizing a script.
7. {no response}
8. No way, excellent course!
9. Merely a little more speed dating. It could also be helpful to have a brief section of the course that contextualizes some of the history of study of paleography: who are the big names in the field, how did the field get to where it is now.
10. The structure of Day One was weighted fairly heavily toward information covered in the pre-reading that didn't necessarily require specialist knowledge to understand (on writing supports, &c.). That left a more limited time to cover the baffling Roman cursive, which even with careful preparation of the assigned readings I really needed instructor guidance to grasp. But overall the course was really well organized and balanced.
11. I can't think of any.
12. Issuing the core readings earlier and an extended bibliography of further reading to help guide extracurricular, self-directed research.

9) *Do you feel that you got your money's worth? How likely are you to recommend this course to others? **On a 1–10 scale**, 1 would indicate that you disagree that you got your money's worth, 5 would indicate a neutral response, and 10 would indicate that you agree that you got your money's worth.*

1. 10

2. 10
3. 10
4. 10
5. 9
6. 10
7. 8
8. 10
9. 10
10. 10
11. 10
12. 10

10) *If your course made any (virtual) field trips outside of the classroom or had guest speakers, do you feel that they enhance the course experience?*

1. {no response}
2. N/A
3. Our guest codex was lovely. Every course should have at least one guest codex.
4. {no response}
5. {no response}
6. N/A
7. N/A
8. Our journey into the UVA SC materials was informative, and our guest speaker on funding available through the Gladys Foundation was also interesting (though I think some sort of guest speaker on funding options available directly through RBS would be even more useful).
9. N/A
10. The SC materials were a great enrichment to supplement the RBS collection (not technically a field trip, since they ended up coming to us).
11. We didn't do any field trips or have guest speakers. The sheer number of items shown to us both from the RBS collection and SC as well as the teacher's image collection made that unnecessary.
12. Honestly, I was skeptical about the grant funding talks but I will quite literally apply to get a catchy project funded that I feared I might never be able to get institutional money for.

11) *Do you have any additional thoughts or advice for anyone considering taking this course in a future year?*

1. I would call this course more intermediate Paleography. I was extremely impressed with LFD's ability to make this course relevant for beginners and advanced paleographers, but "introduction" is a bit of a misnomer based on many of the individuals who

attended the course. If there is sufficient interest in Paleography, I would consider offering Introduction and Advanced or some version of that!

2. Start the reading as far in advance as you can. Maybe ask for an order or ranking for readings if you feel you can't do it all.
3. Take it!
4. Definitely start the reading early—it's a bit top-heavy and the early days start with the most difficult material, which you don't want to tackle after traveling and then long days of class. It's absolutely worth the effort, but get a head start.
5. Just do it!
6. TAKE IT!
7. One week in LFD's "Introduction to Paleography" is a temporal paradox: the week goes by slowly because of all the information you will learn, but it FLIES by because of how eventful, exciting, and stimulating the course is. Keep in mind it is intensive: readings, homework, in-class workshops, and a final presentation—but all very, very worth it.
8. TAKE IT!
9. N/A
10. LFD is an incredible instructor with an exceptional knowledge base who guided us through very difficult material so quickly and clearly. Definitely useful for Classicists!
11. Do the readings, they are well chosen; buy a notebook, and get ready to fill it up with the most incredible collection of paleographical nuggets that you will refer to for a long time.
12. I had watched some of LFD's talks before, and followed her Twitter, so taking the time to familiarize yourself a bit with fragmentology before, plus a bit of binding structure—I was so glad, I love bindings and have studied them beforehand.

12) *If you had to sum up your RBS experience with a single sentence, phrase, or a haiku, what would you say?*

1. Follow the rabbit / the r the a the b the t / follow time in script.
2. Magnificent, Educational & Fun!!
3. We learned to read!
4. I'm now planning to make a quill and trying to actually learn some of these hands from the inside. I'm a nerd, what can I say.
5. If you're not sure about what that symbol is, chances are it's either an i or a t.
6. Paleography can be terrifying. It doesn't have to be.
7. I love you, Bâtarde / Your unpredictable loops / You're silly, but fun.
8. We covered 1000 years of human innovation in only five days. Where else but RBS can you do that?
9. Manuscript summer camp.
10. Gratias ago!

11. Collegial, supportive, caring, joyful.

12. Precious, warm, accessible, brilliant, engaging, thoughtful.