

Sophister Module Description Template 2026-27

Full Name: Medieval Manuscripts

Short Name: Medieval MSS

Lecturer Name(s) and Email Address(es): Mark Faulkner, mark.faulkner@tcd.ie

ECTS Weighting: 10

Semester Taught MT/HT: HT

Year JF/SF/JS/SS: JS

Module Content:

Before the invention of printing, all texts had to be copied by hand. The result was the medieval book, a bespoke production whose appearance varies from the tiny to the enormous, the downright dowdy to the lavishly ornate, and the totally defaced to the immaculately untouched. This course introduces the medieval book in all this variety, with each week's seminar focusing on a single manuscript, probing its contents, construction, scribes and annotators for clues about its place in the literary culture of the time. Case studies include the Exeter Book, one of the four main manuscripts to contain Old English poetry, and the copy of Chaucer's works made by his scribe, Adam, as well as several manuscripts from Trinity's own holdings, which students will be able to examine in the original. Students will receive basic training in skills like palaeography (reading medieval handwriting), codicology (describing the structure of manuscripts) and textual criticism (analysing a copy's relationship to its authorial original) as part of the module.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this module, students should be able to:

- Describe the basic structure of a medieval manuscript
- Show how material aspects of medieval manuscript production influenced the composition of texts
- Analyse particular medieval manuscripts for clues about their producers and readers
- Integrate different kinds of analyses – textual, literary critical, codicological, palaeographical and linguistic – to provide a holistic picture of a particular manuscript

Learning Aims:

- To give students hands-on access to medieval manuscripts in Trinity's collections
- To guide students on the things to look for when examining a medieval manuscript
- To consider some of the material factors that shaped the production and reception of medieval texts

Assessment Details:

- Number of Components: 2
- Name/Type of Component(s): (1) Portfolio of seven small weekly exercises, completed weeks 3-6, 7-10; (2) Essay on a medieval manuscript, chosen from a list provided by the lecturer.

- Word Count of Component(s): (1) c. 7 x 300-400 words; (2) 3,000 words
- Percentage Value of Component(s): (1) 40%; (2) 60%

Preliminary Reading List:

Raymond Clemens & Timothy Graham, *Introduction to Manuscript Studies* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2007)

Please note:

- Curricular information is subject to change.
- Information is displayed only for guidance purposes, relates to the current academic year only and is subject to change.