

CLAL 360 | From Manuscript to Classroom: The palaeographical tradition of the Latin language Spring 2025

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Course Description

This course aims at introducing students to the amazing world of Latin Palaeography. We will focus on the history and development of Latin scripts in Europe from Late Antiquity to the 15th c. AD. As the Latin language evolved in this time frame, so the Latin script underwent profound changes in the areas in which it was used. This course will highlight these changes focusing on the most important scripts; the mechanisms of manuscript production in Europe; and the role of monastic (and non) scriptoria in the cultural advance of Europe. Each script will be discussed in its historical and cultural context, laying emphasis on its evolution and unique characteristics. This will be followed by the close reading of selected texts which will illustrate the variety of handwritings used in Europe.

The course also aims at highlighting the role of the scriptoria in the preservation and transmission of the works of classical authors. Furthermore, it will introduce students to the critical study of manuscripts, allowing them to comprehend the importance of a direct approach to the primary sources and the contribution of palaeography to classical philology. Through the close reading of original texts and the use of modern scholarship, the students will be able to grasp the main principles of the field and use them for their own research. Exams in writing and project assignments (under my supervision and guidance) will demonstrate the students' understanding of the material and progress in class.

Finally, visits to libraries or archives will give students the opportunity for a direct approach to original sources.

Prerequisite: Latin at the Intermediate Level and above.

Learning Objectives

This course will primarily teach students to:

- Show awareness of the history of the evolution of Latin scripts from late antiquity to the Renaissance
- Comprehend palaeographical terminology and conventions
- Be comfortable with sight reading from a manuscript
- Identify and date scripts and scriptoria
- Transcribe accurately a text from the original manuscript
- Understand the political and cultural contexts of the manuscript production
- Use the main scholarly resources relevant to Latin Palaeography (both in print and online)
- Prepare the critical edition of an ancient text using a number of manuscripts
- Appreciate the role of Palaeography in the field of Classics

Course Requirements

Class Contribution – Class Contribution includes physical and mental presence in the classroom, arriving on time, preparation, and participation in class discussions. Class contribution is one of the most important factors for determining your grade for the semester. You are expected to have all assignments completed (transcription, review of modern scholarship, and so on) before you come to class.

You are encouraged to consult with the instructor on all matters pertaining to the course: difficulties in mastering the language, complications in proceeding through the materials of the course. Do not be afraid to ask questions, volunteer to read or answer questions.

Transcription Exams – There will be three transcription exams. Each exam will cover the material already discussed and will consist of the identification (name of the script, place and date of production) and transcription of a text from the original manuscript.

Midterm Exam – Students will be asked to transcribe and date 3 texts from the original manuscripts, and identify the scriptoria that produced them. In addition, they will answer a short essay question that will demonstrate their understanding of the material and progress in class.

Short Presentation – Students will choose one author/chapter from Reynolds’ *Texts and Transmission* and give an oral presentation. That should not be more than 15 minutes long, and you should be ready to answer questions and discuss issues pertaining to your material with the instructor and your colleagues.

Final Project – For this project, students will make a critical edition of a section of an ancient text using a selection of manuscripts given to them by the instructor early in the semester. This critical edition will use as a model the OCT series and will consist of the transcription of the ancient text, an apparatus criticus, and a stemma.

The project will be graded on:

- accuracy of transcription and presentation
- extensive use of material for the apparatus criticus
- accuracy and correctness of the stemma

Those who wish to turn in rough drafts of their projects for consultation are welcomed to do so by **Friday, May 9**. The deadline for the submission of the final project is **Friday, May 16**.

Evaluation and Grading

Your grade for this course will be based on the following distribution:

Class Contribution **15%**
Transcription Exams **15%**
Midterm Exam **30%**
Short Presentation **10%**
Final project **30%**

Grading Scale:

A+ 100-98	B+ 89-87	C+ 79-77	D+ 69-67	F 59-
A 97-93	B 86-83	C 76-73	D 66-63	
A- 92-90	B- 82-80	C- 72-70	D- 62-60	

Please note: in the name of fairness to all students, there will be no extra points awarded, even if you are very close to a higher letter grade.

CYA Regulations and Accommodations

Attendance Policy

Palaeography is a difficult field to master and CYA regards attendance in class and on-site (in Athens or during field study trips) as essential, so attendance at all scheduled meetings is required. All absences are recorded and have consequences that may affect your grade.

Policy on Assignments and Make-up Work

I will accept no late assignments or make-up exams except for valid excuses that will be communicated to me in advance. If you are unable to come to class, please let me know beforehand.

ePolicy on Original Work

Unless otherwise specified, all submitted work must be your own original work. Any ideas taken from the work of others must be clearly identified as quotations, paraphrases, summaries, figures etc., and accurate internal citations and/or captions (for visuals) as well as an accompanying bibliography must be provided.

Use of Laptops

In-class or onsite use of laptops and other devices is permitted if this facilitates course-related activities such as note-taking, looking up references, etc. Laptop or other device privileges will be suspended if devices are not used for class-related work.

N.B. The use of cell phones is prohibited during class time.

Academic Accommodations

Students are required to submit an official letter from the office at their school that handles academic accommodations (generally the Office of Disability Services), or to have that office send a letter. Students who have

submitted such a letter to CYA should also talk to their professors individually to discuss how these accommodations will work in each specific course.

Class Schedule

Class Day	Day/Date	Topics/ Reading/ Assignments
	Jan 23-25	Field Study: Delphi and Ancient Olympia
1	Jan 27	<i>Introduction</i>
2	Jan 29	<i>Scribes and Scriptoria</i> This lecture will focus on the background of the professional scribes responsible for manuscript production and the role of the main scriptoria of the period.
3	Feb 3	<i>Capital Scripts</i> A look at the Capital scripts of late antiquity will be the starting point of our journey in the world of Latin Palaeography.
4	Feb 5	<i>Uncial</i> The script that replaced the Book Capitals and became a standard script for over five centuries in the Latin West will be our focus in this class.
5	Feb 10	<i>Cursive</i> A study of the cursive hands of late antiquity and early medieval period will be our introduction to the main cursive hands of the period in the weeks to come.
6	Feb 12	<i>Beneventan</i> This lecture will survey the Beneventan script, the distinctive hand of southern Italy in the late 8 th -13 th c. which was particularly associated with the scriptorium of the Abbey of Monte Cassino.
	Feb 14-16	Optional Field Study: Venice, Ravenna
7	Feb 17	<i>Visigothic</i> Originating in the Visigothic kingdom of Hispania, this script was among the most successful of the national hands in its fusion of Cursive and Uncial forms.
	Feb 18-21	Field Study: Peloponnese
8	Feb 24	<i>Transcription 1</i> <i>Merovingian</i> This lecture will lay emphasis on the miniscule scripts that developed in the Frankish Empire under the Merovingian dynasty, focusing on some of its most famous types, the Laon and Corbie. The Luxeuil type will also be addressed here.
9	Feb 26	<i>Insular</i> The polymorphism of scripts that developed in Britain and Ireland in the medieval period will be our next stop. The best known types of the Insular script, the Insular majuscule and miniscule, will be studied closely.
	Mar 3	Clean Monday (National Holiday)
10	Mar 5	<i>Visit to a Library</i>
11	Mar 10	Midterm Exam
12	Mar 12	<i>Carolingian 1</i> The theme of this and the following class will be the Carolingian miniscule script, which was favored particularly in France, Germany, and Italy in the 8 th -12 th c.
13	Mar 17	<i>Carolingian 2</i>
	Mar 18-22	Field Study: Northern Greece, Thessaloniki
14	Mar 24	<i>Transcription 2</i> <i>Gothic-Intro</i> An introduction to the main characteristics of the Gothic script, the main handwriting in continental and insular Europe in the 12 th -15 th c., which will be the subject of this and the following three meetings.
	Mar 25	Greek Independence Day (National Holiday)
15	Mar 26	<i>Gothic in England</i>
16	Mar 31	<i>Gothic in Germany</i>
17	Apr 2	<i>Gothic in Italy</i>
	Apr 4-6	Optional Field Study: Rhodes
18	Apr 7	<i>Transcription 3</i> <i>Humanistic</i> Also called <i>antiqua</i> , this script is the result of the efforts of the Italian humanists of the 15 th c. to restore the clarity, legibility, and elegance of pre-Gothic writing.
19	Apr 9	<i>The Printing Industry</i> In this class, we will examine the transition from the manuscript to the printed book. An

		overview of the material and the fonts used in the early books will conclude the session.
	Apr 11-21	Spring Break
20	Apr 23	<i>Preparing a Critical Edition 1</i> This and the following two sessions will highlight the importance of the science, Palaeography, in the field of classical languages. Students will learn how to create a critical edition of a text based on various manuscripts.
	Apr 25-27	Optional Field Study: Crete
21	Apr 28	<i>Preparing a Critical Edition 2</i>
22	Apr 30	<i>Preparing a Critical Edition 3</i>
	May 1	May Day (Labor Day) National Holiday
23	May 5	<i>Short Presentation</i>
	May 5-6	Student Conference
24	May 7	<i>Review Session</i>
FEW	May 16	Deadline for Submission of Final Project

N.B.: **Class schedule**, in terms of subjects and readings, may be subject to change to benefit student learning and in keeping up to date with current research

Course Bibliography

Bischoff, B. (1990) *Latin Palaeography: Antiquity & the Middle Ages*, (trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Brown, M. (1990) *A Guide to Western Historical Scripts from Antiquity to 1600*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press

Chavannes-Mazel, C.A. & Smith, M.M. (edd.) (1996) *Medieval Manuscripts of the Latin Classics: Production and Use*. Los Altos Hills: Anderson Lovelance

Clemens, R. & Graham, T. (2007) *Introduction to Manuscript Studies*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Coulson, F.T. & Babcock, R.G. (2020) *The Oxford Handbook of Latin Palaeography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Reynolds, L.D. (ed.) (1983) *Texts and Transmission: A Survey of the Latin Classics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press

Reynolds, L.D., & Wilson, N.G. (2013) *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature*, 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Tarrant, R. (2016) *Texts, Editors, and Readers: Methods and Problems in Latin Textual Criticism*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press

West, M.L. (1973) *Textual Criticism and Editorial Technique Applicable to Greek and Latin Texts*. Stuttgart: B.G. Teubner

* Additional bibliography on individual subjects and specific aspects of the course as well as copies of original manuscripts will be provided in hardcopy or digital form on moodle.

Recommended Texts

Glare P.G.W., *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, Oxford; New York 1968

Lewis C.T., *An Elementary Latin Dictionary*, Oxford 1992 (Library and at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/>)

Selected Web Resources for Latin Palaeography

- <https://medievalwritings.atilto.com.au/writing.htm>: an introduction to Latin Palaeography
- <https://hmmhschool.org/latin/>: a short introduction to Latin Palaeography with helpful exercises
- <https://digi.vatlib.it/>: digitized MSS from the Vatican Library
- <http://www.digipal.eu/>: Digital Resource and Database of Palaeography, Manuscripts and Diplomatic
- <https://elmss.nuigalway.ie/>: Earlier Latin Manuscripts: Tools for studying the scripts of the oldest Latin manuscripts
- <https://archive.org/details/LexiconAbbreviaturarum/page/n3/mode/2up>: Cappelli, A., *Lexicon Abbreviaturarum* (1928) with preface (in English)
- <https://abbreviations.net/>: access to thousands of abbreviations by subscription

Want to give it a try? Click on the following link and have fun with transcription exercises!
<https://paleographie.huma-num.fr/index.php?!=en>