Medieval circumstances presented multiple challenges to media, mobility, and communication. Cultivators were bound to the land and monks to their monasteries; pilgrims traveled to holy places, crusaders and warriors invaded and then settled foreign lands, rulers and nobles were frequently itinerant. Literacy was largely limited to reading and writing Latin, and possessed principally by churchmen and nuns. The transmission of ideas therefore occurred mainly through the spoken vernacular word, and by means of gestures, images, and the manipulation of symbolic objects (thus, for instance, the relics of saints were carried to distant lands to collect alms, to recover possessions appropriated by nobles, or to aid in battle).

While seas, rivers, ports, ferries, bridges, and networks of roads provided with rest houses, were generally available, the routes and means of transportation differed markedly according to the traveler’s status and the journey’s purpose. Christianity stimulated pilgrimages, missions to convert the heathen, and crusades. Marriage took brides to foreign courts where they served as cultural ambassadors. Medieval kings and great nobles were continually on the road, changing their abode every two or three days. Lesser officials and messengers traveled on government business. Knights sought out tourneys and distant wars to advance their fortunes and reputations. Merchants transported goods to regional fairs, and engaged in international trade. Minstrels, jongleurs, and troubadours traveled to gain patronage and to extend their repertoire, spreading news and influencing the reputations of warriors, heroes, and kings. Students too journeyed extensively from place to place in order to sit at the feet of famous masters; some wandering scholars came to be known as Goliards. Artists were invited to various loci to decorate manuscripts and architects to erect buildings.

The pursuit of favorable opinion was an essential feature in the process of state-building during the Middle Ages. Those who challenged traditional norms also came to rely on the efficiency of communicative systems to expand their ranks with adherents. In disseminating propaganda, medieval society experimented with such forms and methods of communication as emblems, stereotypes, and slogans, thus elaborating modes of communication which, however modified, are still in use today.
Every week, all students must come prepared to discuss the readings assigned for that week. They will have read all assigned books, chapters or articles and taken written notes about their contents and arguments.

In the course of the semester, each student will be required to make two oral presentations. In one, every week, a student will present an oral report of the week’s readings of his or her choice. In preparing their oral reports, students will focus on two different tasks.

I. They will clearly distinguish between primary and secondary sources. In discussing medieval texts, that is, primary sources, students should offer an analysis of content (what does the text say?), while assessing genres, narrative formats, authorial voices, tropes, metaphors (how does the text say what it says?).

II. With respect to modern studies, that is, secondary sources, students will give a précis of the book or article, seek to identify the issues raised by the authors, define the nature of the authors’ sources, assess their methodology and approaches, evaluate the clarity and organization of the study, and consider the validity of the theses and conclusions presented.

Diverse interpretations have come to shape our understanding of the medieval past, which makes a critical approach to the reading of all secondary materials obligatory.

The second type of oral presentation, which will take place on the last meeting of our class, when the seminar will become a conference, and each student will give a short lecture (10 minutes) summarizing the purpose, sources, arguments, and main conclusions of their final paper.

A chief purpose of this seminar is to provide freshman students with an opportunity to utilize the tools and practice the methodologies of historical discipline. Focusing their attention upon medieval texts, images, and objects, and on modern scholarship dealing with the subject of “Media and Communication,” students will write a research paper (10 pages including footnotes), due in final form on (December, TBA, NYU Classes, Assignments), on a topic relating to the theme of the seminar. You may select a topic from among the ones suggested below, or devise your own after consultation with the instructor.

SUGGESTED PAPER TOPICS

1. Letter-writing during the Twelfth Century

2. Food-trade, Markets, and Gastronomy in Thirteenth-Century France

3. Hybrid Communication: Text and Image in Medieval Manuscripts

4. A Comparison of Jewish and Christian Attitudes Toward Literacy and Education during the Central Middle Ages

5. Medieval Travels to the Middle East in the Middle Ages: Means and Purposes
6. Knowledge of the Far East in the Middle Ages

7. Fashions and Fashionistas in Fourteenth-Century Urban Culture

8. Trade Routes of the Medieval Globe

9. Communicating with God: the Faithful and the Mystic

10. Archeology of Medieval Communication: Hostels, Bridges, Transportation, Traveling Gear

The final paper will be prepared through several required shorter essays, each dealing with material relevant to the paper’s topic. Thus students will conduct close readings of primary sources (3 pages, due September TBA on NYU Classes, Assignments), compose a bibliographical essay (5 pages, due October TBA on NYU Classes, Assignments), prepare a proposal for the final paper (4 pages, due November TBA on NYU Classes, Assignments), and write an early draft focusing on footnotes (10 pages, due December TBA on NYU Classes, Assignments). The paper (10 pages including footnotes) is due in final form on December, TBA, NYU Classes, Assignments. When writing notes, and citing books, articles, and websites, students should conform to the latest edition of The Chicago Manual of Style (Bobst, e-book).

The final grade will be calculated as follows:

-10%: class participation
-20%: oral report and lecture
-20%: essay on primary sources
-20%: bibliographical graphical essay  PAPERS SUBMITTED LATE WILL RECEIVE A LESSER GRADE
-30%: paper (Proposal, Draft, Final Version)

Attendance, which is mandatory and required, will be taken every week at 2.00PM

Three absences or late arrivals will result in the final grade being modified as follows: A, will become A-; A-, will become B+ etc
Six absences or late arrivals will result in the final grade being modified as follows: A, will become B; B, will become C etc

All readings are available in the following fashion: Books only available in print have been put on Reserve at the Bobst Library, where they can be read in the Reserve Room; books and articles available on line have been put on Electronic Reserve and can be accessed via NYU Classes, NYU Libraries; scanned articles and book chapters can be accessed via NYU Classes, Course Resources.

The following books are also available for purchase from the University Bookstore:
Kathleen Ashley, Being a Pilgrim : Art and Ritual on the Medieval Routes to Santiago (Burlington, 2009)
J.A. Burrow, *Gestures and Looks in Medieval Narrative* (Cambridge, UK, 2005; online version available at Bobst)
Susan Crane, *The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing, and Identity During the Hundred Years War* (Philadelphia, 2002; online version available at Bobst)
Katherine Kong, *Lettering the Self in Medieval and Early Modern France* (Boydell and Brewer, 2010)
Henri-Jean Martin, *The History and Power of Writing* (Chicago, 1994)
Françoise Piponnier and Perrine Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages* (New Haven, 2000)
*Teaching and Learning in Northern Europe, 1000-1200*, ed. Sally N. Vaughn and Jay Rubenstein (Turnhout, 2006)

1. **Introduction: How did People Communicate in the Middle Ages** – September

Discussion of the syllabus and of the seminar’s requirements

PowerPoint Presentation and discussion of some means of medieval communication

2. **A World of Oral Communication?** – 14 September

Communication in History Technology, Culture, Society By David Crowley, Paul Heyer, Part II: The Tradition of Western Literacy, pp. 35-63

M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record, England 1066-1307*, chapters 7-8, pp. 226-294 (Book Reserves)

Reporter:_______________________

3. **The Growth of Documentary Production** – 21 September


Reporter:_______________________
Assignment: Paper on Primary Sources

The paper should focus exclusively on the reading and analysis of a medieval text, image, or object. Additionally, on a separate page, write five (5) questions raised by the text you have analyzed, which you consider to be worthy of further exploration and of being treated in your final paper.

4. Sending, Receiving, and Collecting Letters –September


Katherine Kong, *Lettering the Self in Medieval and Early Modern France* (Boydell and Brewer, 2010), Introduction, chapters 1-3 (Book Reserves)

5. Medieval Media: The Evidence - October

The class will meet at Columbia University’s Rare Book and Manuscript Library (RBML), at 2PM promptly.

Immediately following the visit, comment in some detail (2 pages) about the material to be presented by Dr Consuelo Deutschke and by your instructor. This report is due on NYU Classes, Assignments, later today, October 5th
6. **Wandering Students and Masters: Arts of Teaching and Modes of Reading – October**

   The class will not meet on October 12th. Instead of attending class, you will write a short paper (three-pages long, double-spaced, no-footnotes) on the readings for that week by answering three questions about them. The questions will be posted on NYU Classes, Assignments, and will be available on Wednesday, October 12th, at 2.00PM. You will have two hours and a half to answer each question in an essay form. The essays must be posted on NYU Classes, Assignments, no later than 4.30PM.

   *Teaching and Learning in Northern Europe, 1000-1200*, ed. Sally N. Vaughn and Jay Rubenstein (Turnhout, 2006), pp. 71-169 (Book Reserves)


   Reporter: ______ there will be no oral report on that day_________________

7. **Forms of Non-Verbal Communication: Images and Colors – October**


   Reporter: _______________________

   **Assignment: Bibliographical Essay**

   Students are encouraged to focus their bibliographical essays on the topic they will treat in their papers.

   We will review the resources and methods for creating a bibliography in class.

   This paper is due on NYU Classes, Assignments, on October 28th.

8. **Communication as Performance: Silence, Gestures, Rituals – October**
9. Medieval Objects: Circulation and Communication – November

Patrick Geary, *Furta Sacra. Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (e-book, Electronic Reserves, NYU Classes, NYU Libraries)


Assignment: Paper Proposal

.Students will come to class ready to discuss the topic of their papers.
.We will review ways to develop a topic into a proposal that contains the paper’s title, describes the paper’s purpose, scope, and significance, and outlines the information gathered for and the argument made in the paper.
.Proposals are due on NYU Classes, Assignments, on November TBA

10. Dress Codes: Communicating Status and Identity – November

Susan Crane, *The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing, and Identity During the Hundred Years War* (e-book, Electronic Reserves, NYU Classes, NYU Libraries)

Françoise Piponnier and Perrine Mane, *Dress in the Middle Ages* (Book Reserves)

Reporter: ______________________
11. **Pilgrimages** – November

Kathleen Ashley, *Being a pilgrim: art and ritual on the medieval routes to Santiago* (Burlington, 2009) (Book Reserves)

Reporter: __________________________

**PRIMARY SOURCES TO BE READ AND ANALYZED IN CLASS:**

**Assignment: Draft with Focus on Footnotes**
- In preparation for writing your draft with footnotes, we will look at footnotes in the weekly readings, and analyze 1) the ways that they were put together by the authors, and 2) how they work for the readers.
- Drafts are due on NYU Classes, Assignments, on December TBA

12. **Thanksgiving vacation: ENJOY!**

13. **Travels: Spies and Exotic Places** – November


Reporter: __________________________

14. **Traders and Trade Routes of the Medieval Globe** – December


Reporter:_________________________

**Assignment: Discussion of Drafts in Class**
.students will be organized in groups and review the drafts of their fellow classmates.

15. **Conference** – December

Lectures
The seminar will become a conference where each student will give an oral presentation of his or her paper.

Papers
Papers in their final form must have been posted on NYU Classes, Assignments, by **Sunday, December TBA**