

Term Paper: Specifications and Suggested Topics

Assignment: Write a paper on any medieval manuscript(s) or any aspect of textual scholarship, palaeography, or digital editing.

Length: Within ten percent of 5,000 words for M.EP.02b(-L); within ten percent of 7,500 words for B.EP.11b, M.EP.05b, and M.EP.05c. Students of M.EP.02b(-L) may alternatively write the exam.

Approval: Run at least the topic, and ideally (at a later stage) a detailed sentence outline, by your instructor for approval. (See [these slides](#) for an explanation of the appropriate sentence outline format.)

Deadline: Final term paper due on 27 August; try to have a topic by mid-May.

Some Possible Topics

The following lists are intended to give you an impression of the range of appropriate topics, but please do not infer that you are limited to the options listed. While you may copy out a topic directly from this list, you may prefer to come up with your own, and it is at any rate your own responsibility to formulate a research question. Remember that originality of argument (and by implication originality of research question) is a factor in the assessment of your paper (see marking grid overleaf). Your best strategy is to use preexisting scholarship primarily as a stepping-stone, while crafting the core of your argument on the basis of your own original thought.

Papers for this course may investigate a medieval textual tradition in Latin or in any Germanic or Romance language, but Old English is especially encouraged given its relevance to the hosting department, the instructor's expertise, the modest palaeographical skill required, and the modest size of the corpus. Whereas humanities scholarship is typically expected to advance an argument, essays on textual traditions may be more descriptive when seeking to trace a development, provided they do offer evidence for the narrative they present. Papers on technical topics may choose to analyze a problem in digital methods and propose a technical solution in as much detail as possible. For an understanding of the textual landscape, manuscript catalogues are indispensable, and they additionally make for an excellent place to look for paper topics.

For any [Old English or Anglo-Latin](#) topic, you'll want to make use of the following (esp. Ker for Old English, Gneuss-Lapidge for Latin):

- N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957)
- Helmut Gneuss and Michael Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: A Bibliographical Handlist of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England Up To 1100* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014)
- Orietta Da Roid et al., "The Production and Use of English Manuscripts 1060 to 1220"
<<https://www.le.ac.uk/ee/em1060to1220/>>

Also make use of the metadata collected at such resources as [Parker on the Web](#), [British Library: Digitised Manuscripts](#), and the [Digital Bodleian](#).

For any [Old High/Low German](#) topic, you'll want to make use of [handschriftencensus.de](#).

For any [Old Norse](#) topic, you'll want to make use of [handrit.is](#).

Please refer to the following lists of topics for inspiration.

Topics in Manuscript Studies and Textual Scholarship

- The evolution of *De falsis diis* (on false gods): from Ælfric to Wulfstan and Iceland
- Textual problems with *Evil Tongues*
- Textual problems with *The Ruin*
- The production and dissemination of Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies*
- The dissemination of Ælfric's *Grammar*
- Liturgical manuscripts in early medieval England: taxonomy, production, provenance
- The textual heritage of the encyclopaedic notes in [London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A.iii](#)
- The *raison d'être* and internal logic of [London, British Library, MS Harley 3271](#)
- The *raison d'être* and internal logic of the Exeter Book
- The *raison d'être* and internal logic of the [Nowell Codex](#) (*Beowulf* manuscript)
- The relationship between the three witnesses of [Napier homily I](#) (on the nature of faith)
- The relationship between the three witnesses of *De infantibus non baptizandis* (on unbaptized children)
- The textual connections of [Vercelli homily IX](#)
- Wulfstan's autographs and what they can tell us about his editorial approach

Topics in Digital Methods

- Proposal for an XML edition of the Old English *Consolation of Philosophy*
- Proposal for an XML edition of the Latin *Distichs of Cato* (and/or their medieval translations)
- Proposal for an XML corpus of Old English prose
- Solutions for the digital display of apparatuses and commentaries
- Could stemmatology be automated?

To identify relevant scholarship in medieval studies, you will want to make use of the [International Medieval Bibliography](#) in addition to resources like [Google Scholar](#). Not all Old English prose texts are available in translation, so you'll have to hunt down translations in editions, readers, and translation series, but translations of the poetry may be found in Craig Williamson's *Complete Old English Poems*. If you choose to write on digital methods, you'll want to refer to existing projects (see, e.g., §3 of the bibliography on the [syllabus](#), or the list of [presentation topics](#)), but you'll also want to browse such journals as *Digital Medievalist*, *Digital Humanities Quarterly*, and the journals listed [here](#).

Marking Grid

The following marking grid indicates the considerations used to mark papers for this course (but not their weighting):

Aspect	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Argument <i>or</i> survey (quality, originality, thoroughness)										
Structure										
Textual <i>or</i> technical analysis										
Use of secondary sources										
Grasp of source language <i>or</i> digital environments										
Command of academic English										
Mechanics (style, referencing, formatting)										
Length										