

Term Paper: Specifications and Suggested Topics

Assignment: Write a paper on any medieval letter(s), peritext(s), correspondent(s), or any aspect of the culture of medieval correspondence or peritexts, such as rhetoric, manuscript context, the functions of prefaces or of scribbles, etc.

Length: Within ten percent of 3,000 words for M.EP.02b; within ten percent of 7,500 words for B.EP.11b, M.EP.05b, and M.EP.05d.

Language requirement: Whatever source language you choose to work with, you'll have to demonstrate *some* ability to engage with the original language, by at least citing passages in the original language (while offering a published translation, or your own, alongside) and discussing specific elements of your text with reference to concepts in the source language.

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

Deadline: Final term paper due on 25 March; try to have a topic by late November.

Some Possible Topics

Papers for this course may investigate any peritexts and/or letters with some connection to northwestern Europe and written in Old English, Latin, Old Norse, or Old Low German.

The following list is 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.

Some suggestions:

- Jerome's influence on Old English and Anglo-Latin dictaminal rhetoric
- The early medieval/Old English preface as a PR opportunity
- The rationale of manuscript dissemination as judged from early English prefaces
- Ælfric's politics as judged from his correspondence and peritexts
- Ælfric's personality as judged from his correspondence and peritexts
- Alcuin's power as a royal correspondent
- Missionary strategy according to early medieval letters

- The implicit *ars dictaminis* of King Alfred's court
- Ælfric's implicit *ars dictaminis*
- The strategic use of quotations in the letters of e.g. Boniface, Alcuin, etc.

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**, but the bibliography at the end of the syllabus is a good place to start, and any book or article you read will point you to further works. Not all Old English and Latin prose letters and prefaces are available in translation, but translations of Ælfric's Latin prefaces are in Wilcox; translations of the poetic peritexts are in Irvine and Godden; Fehr has translated all of Ælfric's Old English pastoral letters into German (and I have access to unpublished draft translations into English should you not read German); and many translations of Latin letters pertaining to pre-Conquest England may be found in Whitelock.

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 (quality, originality, thoroughness)										
Structure										
Textual analysis										
Use of secondary sources										
Grasp of source language										
Command of academic English										
Mechanics (style, referencing, formatting)										
Length										