

Book History (A004501)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 5.0 **Study time 150 h**

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2026-2027

A (semester 1)	English	Gent	seminar lecture
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Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Van Remoortel, Marianne	LW07	lecturer-in-charge
Cuomo, Andrea	LW06	co-lecturer
Vorobyev, Grigory	LW07	co-lecturer

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027

	crdts	offering
Master of Science in Teaching in Arts and Humanities (main subject History)	5	A
Master of Arts in Linguistics and Literature(main subject Historical Perspectives)	5	A
Master of Arts in Art History, Musicology and Theatre Studies	5	A
Master of Arts in Historical Linguistics and Literature	5	A
Master of Arts in History	5	A
Exchange Programme Critical Perspectives on Culture	5	A
Exchange Programme Cultures and Languages in Context	5	A
Exchange Programme History	5	A
Exchange Programme Medieval Studies and Auxiliary Sciences	5	A
Elective Set Critical Perspectives on Culture	5	A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

manuscript, Middle Ages, codicology, print, book, periodical, modern period, digitisation, materiality, circulation

Position of the course

This course is not intended to be exhaustive or to provide a comprehensive overview, but aims to familiarise students with various analytical approaches to the history of the book. The course reflects recent developments within the discipline and emphasises the study of the book as a material and cultural artefact. It focuses on questions and methods relating to the production, design, dissemination, transmission and accessibility of hand-written and printed works within their historical context.

Contents

The course consists of two separate, complementary parts.

Part 1 offers an introduction to codicology. It explores in depth the study of materials, structure, layout, decoration, binding and the historical development of (primarily European) manuscripts; techniques for the codicological description of manuscripts; and the analysis of codicological data with a view to determining the date and provenance of the object.

Part 2 focuses on the printed book from the nineteenth century to the present day, from the industrialisation of the printing press to the digital age. How does the book change when machines take over the production process? What does reading mean in different historical and social contexts? How do books function as

commodities, cultural capital or sources of conflict and debate? And what happens to the book when it transcends its physical form in adaptations and digital environments? This part of the course explores the history of the book through thematic case studies that focus on these questions. Students analyse texts, images and book objects in relation to their production, use, circulation, preservation and accessibility, and critically reflect on the changing role of the book from the nineteenth century to the present day.

Initial competences

No essential prior knowledge is required. However, students are expected to be familiar with historiographical methods and to be able to independently locate relevant bibliographic sources.

Final competences

- 1 Demonstrate a solid understanding of the processes involved in the production of manuscripts and early printed books.
- 2 Analyse and describe manuscripts and print media in a professional codicological manner, i.e., following descriptive frameworks appropriately discussed in class.
- 3 Apply knowledge of the material aspects of manuscripts and early printed books to scientific research on (literary) history.
- 4 Demonstrate insight into the impact of printing techniques and print media on the organisation and dissemination of knowledge and ideas and on writing and reading practices.
- 5 Reflect critically on the impact of digitisation on the study of print media.

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is unrestricted: the student takes into consideration the conditions mentioned in 'Starting Competences'

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Seminar, Lecture

Extra information on the teaching methods

All classes take place on campus and are not recorded.

Study material

Type: Slides

Name: Slides

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Available on Ufora : Yes

Type: Reader

Name: Reader

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Available on Ufora : Yes

References

Course content-related study coaching

Students can talk to the teachers after class. They can ask questions via the digital learning platform Ufora or make an appointment via email.

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Participation, Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is possible in modified form

Extra information on the examination methods

Participation (10%): Active participation in the seminars is required. Students are expected to contribute to discussions, answer questions, and prepare for the seminars by reading the assigned texts.

Assignments part 1 (15%): During part 1 of the course, students complete a number of written assignments.

Assignments part 2 (45%): During part 2 of the course, students complete a number of short written assignments and submit a longer final assignment at the end.

Oral exam (30%): The final exam for part 1 will consist of questions on topics dealt with in class.

Responsible use of generative AI tools for the written assignments is permitted.

Calculation of the examination mark

Your final grade will be based on in-class participation (10%), written assignments (60%), and oral exam (30%).

If a student is absent without a valid reason or does not participate in (any part of) the assessment (assignments and oral exam), they will not pass and, even if their total score exceeds 9/20, will receive a final score of no more than 8/20.

A passing score for the permanent evaluation can be carried over to the second examination period.

Facilities for Working Students

1. Possible exemption from educational activities requiring student attendance; a task is imposed in substitution after discussion with the lecturer
2. Possible rescheduling of the examination to a different time in the same academic year
3. Feedback can be given during an appointment during and after office hours