

Methodology: Palaeography with Close Reading (A006705)

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 (Year)	Dutch	Gent	seminar	0.0h
			independent work	0.0h
			lecture	0.0h

Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Van Sumere, Caroline	LW03	staff member
De Paermentier, Els	LW03	lecturer-in-charge
Roose, Alexander	LW07	co-lecturer
Uyttersprot, Veerle	LW07	co-lecturer
Van Acker, Marieke	LW06	co-lecturer
Vergeer, Tim	LW07	co-lecturer

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027

	crdts	offering
Bachelor of Arts in Art History, Musicology and Theatre Studies	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in History	5	A
Linking Course Master of Arts in History	5	A
Preparatory Course Master of Arts in History	5	A
Elective Set History	5	A

Teaching languages

Dutch

Keywords

Palaeography, historical methodology, 'deciphering' of historical handwritten texts, 13th to 20th centuries

Position of the course

This basic course offers an introduction to the 'deciphering' and understanding of handwritten documents in vernacular (Dutch and French) dating from the Middle Ages up to the 20th century. Special attention goes to the historical context of the selected sources. The course also teaches some basic rules for editing historical texts.

Contents

The course mainly focuses on the deciphering and close reading of a set of about 20 sample texts written in various script types (posed and cursive handwritings). During the lessons, main attention goes to particular palaeographical challenges with regard to abbreviations, letter forms, punctuation, numerals and specific terminology. In each lesson one text fragment is read aloud in class. The remaining text part is to be transcribed individually at home by the students. Students who send their complete transcription to the teachers will receive the correct version in return. In addition to the texts treated in class, four to six compulsory transcription exercises are to be made.

The most ancient documents are linguistically analyzed and explained in a separate teaching module (second term).

The last two lessons focus on AI tools for Handwritten Text Recognition

(Transkribus).

Initial competences

Have a good knowledge of Dutch and French.

Final competences

- 1 Have proficient knowledge of the terminological framework with regard to components of letters, types of abbreviations and numerals.
- 2 Have insight into the methodology of history.
- 3 Have a basic knowledge of the diversity of sources and academic literature (also in another language than Dutch) used in historical research and the specialist skills required to read and interpret sources (also in another language than Dutch).
 - Have basic knowledge of the evolution of writing in the Latin alphabet from the thirteenth to the twentieth century;
 - Have basic knowledge of Middle French and Middle Dutch grammar and lexicon for analyzing and understanding historical vernacular texts.
- 4 Have the ability to set up a simple historical research strategy in the form of a roadmap. Have the ability to strategically and independently decipher handwritten documents in the vernacular (Dutch and French) according to the method learned. Have the ability to transcribe historical handwritten texts according to the rules of the Royal Historical Commission.
- 5 Have the ability to justify a heuristic method and historical bibliographical research based on scientific criteria.
Have the ability to work with historical dictionaries and repertories for palaeographic abbreviations.
- 6 Have the ability to indicate the most appropriate types of sources relative to a specific historical research question.
Have the ability to link typologically diverse vernacular sources to relevant research questions."
- 7 Have insight into how archives and heritage institutions work.
- 8 Have basic knowledge of digital tools for automatic handwritten text recognition.

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, Independent work

Extra information on the teaching methods

- Interactive seminars taught separately to two groups of students (23 lessons)
- Guided independent work: transcription of remaining text sections which were not treated in class, compulsory online tutorials with self-correction tool; additional online tutorials available to prepare the texts that will be discussed in class.
- Theoretical lecture 'Palaeography' (1 lesson, first term)
- Lectures 'Close reading' (12 lessons, second term)

Study material

Type: Handbook

Name: Declercq, G. en H. Roose, Oud schrift voor beginners. Inleiding tot de paleografie (2023)

Indicative price: € 28

Optional: yes

Language : Dutch

Online Available : No

Available in the Library : Yes

Available through Student Association : No

Type: Reader

Name: Theoretical guidelines on abbreviations, numbers and terminology
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Language : Dutch
Available on Ufora : Yes
Online Available : Yes
Available in the Library : Yes
Available through Student Association : No

Type: Audiovisual Material

Name: Digital images of handwritten source texts (13th-20th centuries)
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Language : Dutch
Available on Ufora : Yes
Online Available : Yes
Available in the Library : Yes
Available through Student Association : No
Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : intensive
Usability and Lifetime within the Study Programme : one-time
Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : not

References

Course content-related study coaching

Students have permanent access to the teachers and assistant teachers by email or in person by appointment.

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

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

Written assessment

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

Written assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Participation

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

not applicable

Extra information on the examination methods

Periodical assessment (90%): written examination, consists of questions related to the teaching module of 'Palaeography' (transcription of a text fragment treated in course and of an unseen text fragment) and questions related to the teaching module of 'Close reading' (questions related to Middle Dutch and Middle French texts treated in class).

Non-periodical assessment (10%): participation in course, completing the additional compulsory transcription exercises (four to six online tutorials)

Calculation of the examination mark

Periodical assessment: 90%

Non-periodical assessment: 10%

Facilities for Working Students

Facilities:

- 1 Possible exemption from educational activities requiring student attendance; an alternative task will be assigned
- 2 Possible rescheduling of the examination to a different time in the same academic year (in case of an overlapping in the exam schedule)
- 3 Feedback can be given by email or by appointment during office hours

Extra information:

Regular training and communication with the lecturers and assistants is

indispensable. For all classes involving 'close reading' it is important to have good notes.

For more information concerning flexible learning: contact the monitoring service of the faculty of Arts and philosophy