

ISLA 604 - Arabic Manuscript Tradition

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McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).

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In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

Description

The aim of the course is to introduce graduate students to Arabic manuscript studies (both codicology and palaeography). Most sessions will consist of theory and practice. The latter will involve a physical examination of selected manuscripts from the McGill collections, as well as the reading of such texts as colophons, audition and ownership statements, and study notes.

Requirements: Students are required to have good reading knowledge of Arabic.

Main Topics

1. An overview of the manuscript age (Session 1)
2. The world of the scribe (Session 1)
3. Writing surfaces (papyrus, parchment, paper) (Session 2)
4. Writing implements (pens, inks, etc.) (Session 3)
5. Alpha-numerical and numerical systems (Session 3)
6. The forms of books (rolls and codices) (Session 3)
7. The textblock and its make-up (Session 4)
8. The text, its arrangement and presentation (Session 5)

9. The colophon (Session 6)
10. Dates and dating (Session 6)
11. Painted decoration (illumination) (Session 7)
12. Bookbinding (Session 7)
13. Scripts and hands (introduction to palaeography) (Session 8 and 9)
14. Transmission of texts (collation and certificates) (Session 10)
15. Textual corruptions and corrections (Session 10)
16. History of manuscripts (Session 11)
17. Manuscripts and popular culture (magic and superstition) (Session 11)
18. Forgeries in manuscripts (Session 11)
19. Some remarks on textual criticism and editing (Session 12)
20. Describing and examining MSS (Session 12 and 13)

Method of Evaluation

1. Paper/essay - involving a critical analysis of a manuscript or group of manuscripts and its (their) printed edition(s).
2. Transcription (in Arabic script) of two selected pieces, such as colophons and/or ownership statements.
3. Evaluation: paper/essay - 80%, transcription - 20%.