

Faculty of Arts and Letters



HIST2190

Diplomacy in the Middle Ages, including notions of chronology, sigillography and heraldry

[30h] 3.5 credits

This course is taught in the 2nd semester

Teacher(s): Jacques Pycke
Language: French
Level: Second cycle

Aims

By the end of this course, students should be able to determine the validity of acts that seal or attest to covenants, laws or obligations; to scrutinize their constitutive parts or their arrangement; interpret their formulae and specific vocabulary and explain their elaboration. He will be able to date acts whose dating techniques diverged from modern practices. He will have made a first approach to decoding seals and coats of arms.

Main themes

The course should foster the primary objectives of the discipline. That being to class by category acts and related documents. Analyse their tradition, from the rough draft to the original and the various forms of copy. Scrutinize their constitutive parts and their arrangement. Interpret their formulae and their specific vocabulary. Explain their elaboration and, therefore, the organization of chancelleries for public acts, ways of drawing up covenants for private acts and procedures for sending them. Determine, finally, the conditions for their validity and seriate the types of anomalies denouncing falsifications. It is obvious that one need progress in knowledge of sigillography, because seals authenticate so many medieval acts, and in knowledge of technical chronology, because dating techniques diverge from modern practices. Along the way, the course can widen perspectives. Study, for example, the system of evidence in medieval society. Penetrating motivations and gauging the skill of forgers. Uncover elements of ideology and factors of mentality buried in preambles, comminatory clauses and even the formulae of acts. Decode the manifold language of seals, where writing and imagery come together.

Content and teaching methods

Diplomatics is understood here as a body of learning and knowledge developed from the 1670's on, and founded by Mabillon, for treating one type of document, diplômas, but now extended to all acts public and private. This involves grasping the types and status of such texts and examining what can be done with them. The auxiliary sciences, by means of which one can understand the content and meaning of these texts, are mentioned here : chronology, sigillography, heraldry.

Other information (prerequisite, evaluation (assessment methods), course materials recommended readings, ...)

Prerequisites : Knowledge of Latin.

Evaluation : Oral examination.

Teaching materials : Student notes.

A manual conceived like a diplomatist's studio.

A data base.

Teaching : The exercises provide students means of applying types of diplomatic analysis and resolving chronological formulae in ancient computation.

Programmes in which this activity is taught

ISLE3DA/ME Diplôme d'études approfondies en philosophie et lettres (médiévisique)

Other credits in programs

HIST21	Première licence en histoire	(3.5 credits)
HIST22	Deuxième licence en histoire	(3.5 credits)