For medieval Christians, saints' bodies existed simultaneously in heaven and on earth, and their material remains were powerful sites of intercession and transformation. The shrines and reliquaries that contained holy relics did much more than protect and enclose: they provided persuasive histories for relics, connected saint to community, and negotiated the distance between interior and exterior.

In this seminar, we explore the shifting strategies of representation and ritual that made reliquaries meaningful. Readings and discussions focus on issues such as theologies of fragmentation; relic thefts and collecting; body-part reliquaries; materials and materiality; medieval relic collections; and the socio-political roles of relics and reliquaries.

Requirements

☐ Attendance and participation in all seminar meetings, including: preparation of readings and discussion questions; contribution to shared research resource project (see assignment on Trunk); co-leading discussion session; review and feedback of peer projects

☐ Research project, including: proposal; annotated bibliography; oral presentation; draft; 45-minute presentation of research; revised research paper (20-25 pages); online research updates and discussions

Texts and Readings

Most assigned readings will be available either digitally (PDF, online text, or E-book) or on library reserve. The following texts will be used regularly and provide excellent overviews of the topic:

*Treasures of Heaven* exhibition catalog (New Haven: Yale UP, 201

Medieval Reliquaries: Calendar

26 January: Intro to Relics and Reliquaries

02 February: Cult of the Saints

09 February: Research Resources and Guides
resources assignment due
preliminary proposals due online by 2.15

16 February: Social Life of Relics

23 February: Sacred Commodities
bibliographies and research updates online

01 March: Bodies and Body Parts

08 March: Materials and Materiality

15 March: Visuality, Collection, and Display

22 March: no class meeting: Spring Break

29 March: Presentations/Drafts annotated bibliography due

05 April: Presentations/Drafts

12 April: Presentations/Drafts

19 April: Presentations/Drafts

26 April: Conclusions

revised papers due by 10 May, noon
Learning Objectives
In this seminar, students will deepen their knowledge of medieval art, and their ability to contextualize its historical and cultural significance. The seminar also aims to advance the ability to conduct art historical research; oral presentation skills; critical thinking ability in response to scholarly literature; and understanding of disciplinary history, theories, and methods.

Course Policies
☐ All work is due as noted on the course calendar and/or Trunk.
☐ No late work will be accepted for this course without prior written permission of the instructor. (Emailing me the night before an assignment is due does not constitute permission.)
☐ Arrangements for extensions are at the instructor’s discretion, and may include a grade reduction.
☐ Most assignments may be turned in as PDFs or other electronic documents. Computer and/or printer failure will not be considered a valid excuse for late or missing assignments.
☐ Keep a copy of all assignments until you receive your final grade for the course.
☐ Unless specifically requested, do not submit assignments as email attachments.
☐ If you are absent from class be prepared for the next meeting by following the syllabus.
☐ Attendance at all class meetings is expected. More than one absence will result in a lower grade, as will excessive lateness. Do not enroll in this class if you have foreseeable scheduling conflicts. Excused absences must be documented as emergencies by your academic Dean or advisor.

Especially in the work of the course that is collaborative, be respectful of the members of your team in organizing and planning your work.

Policy on Plagiarism
Plagiarism is intellectual theft, using someone else’s words and/or ideas as if they were your own; plagiarism is dishonorable, and a violation of Tufts’ policies on academic ethics and integrity. You are responsible for educating yourself about what constitutes plagiarism; please read the policies on Academic Integrity, and speak with me if you have any questions. Tufts’ Academic Integrity policy is available online: http://uss.tufts.edu/studentaffairs/publicaionsandwebsites/Academicintegrity.pdf

Accommodations
Students with accommodation needs must register with Student Services, and inform instructor within the first two weeks of the semester, so that appropriate arrangements can be made.
Reading List (subject to change)

02 Feb The Cult of the Saints

Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints* 1-22 + 69-85

Cynthia Hahn, *Strange Beauty* 4-29 + 45-64

Patrick Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* 163-176

Primary texts: see Trunk site

16 Feb Social Life of Relics and Reliquaries

This topic focuses on pilgrimage, liturgy, and politics: the ways in which relics and reliquaries functioned in medieval society. Readings will introduce issues of patronage and ideology (both ecclesiastical and secular), as well encounters with reliquaries in medieval communities.


*Strange Beauty*, 145-160 (Ch 9, “Reliquaries in Action”)


Patrick Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* pp 95-124 (Chapter 5, “Humiliation of Saints” and Chapter 6, “Coercion of Saints”) [e-book, Tisch] [suggested]
23 Feb Sacred Commodities

The readings for this week’s discussion concern issues circulation, distribution, and economics — including how relics were fragmented, stolen, and exchanged; connections between Byzantium and the West; and the sources of precious materials for reliquaries.

Patrick Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages*, pp 194-218 (Chapter 10, “Sacred Commodities”) [e-book]


*Treasures of Heaven*, 137-147 (Bagnoli, “The Stuff of Heaven: Materials and Craftsmanship in Medieval Reliquaries”)

*Strange Beauty*, 223-244 (Ch 13, “The Impact of 1204”)


*Strange Beauty*, Ch 12 209-221 (“A Case Study: Wibald of Stavelot as Patron”) [suggested]

1 March Bodies and Body Parts

The readings for this week begin with historical material about theologies of bodily fragmentation, and continue on to specific studies of body-part reliquaries — this week’s readings come primarily from Caroline Bynum and Cynthia Hahn.


*Strange Beauty*, 67-71 (Ch 4, “Spolia and Sign, Metaphor and Simile”)

*Strange Beauty*, 117-133 (Ch 7, “Heads”)

*Strange Beauty*, 134-141 (Ch 8, “Other Body Parts”)

Further Reading:


Other essays in *Gesta* 36/1 (1997)

**7 March Materials and Materiality**

This topic builds on previous discussions of economics, craftsmanship, and symbolism to investigate the relationship between materials and meaning in medieval reliquaries. Several articles focus on various aspects of gemstones, and this topic includes some technical essays on conservation and scientific discoveries.

*Strange Beauty*, 31-44 (Ch 2, “The Reliquary and Its Maker”)

*Strange Beauty*, 103-116 (Ch 6, “Like and Unlike Metaphors”)


Further reading:

- John Cherry, *Goldsmiths* (Toronto, 1992) [Tisch reserve]

**15 March Visuality, Collection, Display**

This discussion topic will explore the physical presentation and reception of reliquaries, and the theories and theologies of vision and sight that underpinned the medieval cult of relics — it will also draw on modern/post-modern discourses of spectacle, performativity, and aesthetics.

*Strange Beauty*, 199-208 (Ch 11, “Relic Display”)

*Treasures of Heaven*, 55-68 (Klein, “Sacred Things and Holy Bodies: Collecting Relics from Late Antiquity to the Early Renaissance”)

Cynthia Hahn, “The Meaning of Early Medieval Treasuries”, in *Reliquiare im Mittelalter* 1-20 [PDF]


Cynthia Hahn, “Relics, Reliquaries, Relation, and Response,” introductory essay to the exhibition *Objects of Devotion and Desire* [link on Trunk]

Further Reading
- Gia Toussaint, “Die Sichtbarkeit des Gebeins im Reliquiar” in *Reliquaire im Mittelalter*, pp 89-106