

# Reconsidering the Boundaries of Late-Medieval Political Literature I and II

**[Kalamazoo International Congress on Medieval Studies](#)**

**Centre for Medieval Literature (University of Southern Denmark/University of York) & Canadian Society of Medievalists/Société canadienne des médiévistes**

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The increased engagement of late-medieval authors in very precise political conversations, and the way these writers justified their interventions in the political sphere by inserting themselves as characters in their own texts and creating authorial personas, have received increased scrutiny from scholars over the last several years. Some of the challenges of studying this literature include 1) the many recognizable genres involved, with individual texts often incorporating characteristics of multiple genres such as mirrors for princes, autobiography, allegory, travel narrative, and letters; and 2) the tendency to group such literature by language and/or modern national borders, making it difficult to consider medieval political literature in the context of the inter-regional conversations in which it often participated.

These three-paper sessions aim to take a broad and interdisciplinary view, using the term "political literature" to denote any form of writing that had the communication of political messages as one of its main goals. This includes visual elements such as images and marginalia, the physical layout of text and image, and the codicological structure of the manuscripts themselves. The sessions aim to open up the field of late medieval political literature and its manuscripts by thinking outside of modern definitions of genre, disciplinary conventions, and so-called "national" borders, with the broad goal of connecting scholars working in this area from different linguistic traditions and from the disciplinary perspectives of history, art history, and literature. Building on an upcoming workshop (March 2017) on late-medieval political literature in France, Burgundy, and England, our aim is to put literature from these regions into conversation with that produced in other areas. By holding two sessions, we hope to attract papers covering a larger variety of languages and geographical locations than could be accomplished with one session alone, and to build a longer-term network of scholars working on this material.

Questions the sessions might address include: How did authors view their own role as contributors to contemporary political conversations? What textual and/or visual tactics did they use to convey their messages? What audiences did they address? To what extent did writers attempt to criticize and/or support individual or institutional power? And how can considering political literature from interdisciplinary, as well as multiple geographical and linguistic traditions help us to better understand the political conversations taking place in a time of significant "international" problems such as the papal schism and the Hundred Years War? We will particularly welcome papers working from interdisciplinary perspectives and that can broaden our geographical scope.