

Application to Host 2023 Vagantes Conference

A. Name of University:

- Harvard University

B. Names of departments, institutes, and student organizations potentially involved

Departments, Programs:

- Standing Committee on Medieval Studies, Committee on the Study of Religion, Committee on Archeology, Center for Middle Eastern Studies; Departments of English, History, History of Art and Architecture, Celtic Languages and Literatures, Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations (NELC), Romance Languages and Literatures, Germanic Languages and Literatures, Classics, Comparative Literature, Music, and History of Science; Harvard Divinity School and Harvard Law School.

Institutes, Centers, Projects

- Mahindra Center for the Humanities Medieval Seminar, Special Program in Byzantine Studies, Houghton Library, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collections, Mary Jaharis Center for Byzantine Art and Culture, MIT Ancient and Medieval Studies Colloquium, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Alwaleed bin Talal Islamic Studies Program, Aga Khan Program in Islamic Architecture, and Center for the Study of World Religions

Student Organizations

- Medieval Studies Graduate Interdisciplinary Workshop, Medieval English Colloquium, Medieval History Graduate Workshop, Celtic Studies Research and Conference Workshop, GSAS Germanic Forum, Workshop on Arabic and Islamic Studies, Medieval Latin Reading Group, Harvard Early Sciences Working Group, Faculty of Arts and Sciences Premodern Race Seminar, Early Modern World at Harvard, and Law and History Workshop

C. Statement of Interest

Harvard University was host to the inaugural Vagantes Conference in 2002. More than twenty years later, the students and faculty associated with Harvard's Standing Committee on Medieval Studies would enthusiastically welcome the opportunity to host the conference, now an established and much-anticipated annual event, for a second time. The Standing Committee on Medieval Studies is the hub for the study of the Middle Ages and the premodern world on Harvard's campus, working in conjunction with the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collections in Washington, DC, and the Villa I Tatti in Florence, Italy. Medieval Studies at Harvard is inherently interdisciplinary, as members of the Standing Committee are drawn from Harvard's extensive medievalist faculty across the many departments listed above, as well as graduate students from an even wider range of disciplines and intellectual backgrounds. Harvard offers a Secondary Field in Medieval Studies for both undergraduates and Ph.D. students, as well as the M.A. and Ph.D. degree to medievalists across many departments and schools. Each year, faculty members of the Standing Committee offer a wide range of introductory courses and advanced seminars across the academic departments and programs listed above. In addition to courses on medieval history, literature, and culture, Harvard offers the opportunity to study many ancient and medieval languages, including Old and Middle English, Old Irish, Coptic, Ge'ez, Syriac, Medieval Latin, and more, as well as courses in Latin, Greek, Arabic, and Hebrew paleography and manuscript studies. In recent years, courses on such subjects as Slavery in the Global Middle Ages and Queer Theory and Medieval Literature have expanded the range of perspectives from which students at Harvard consider the medieval world.

Annual lectures and events, such as the Mahindra Center for the Humanities Medieval Seminar and the Collations series of lunchtime talks, foster an interdisciplinary intellectual community outside the classroom. The vibrant and enthusiastic research culture of Harvard Medieval Studies is also manifest in numerous graduate student-led organizations and colloquia, such as the Medieval Studies Graduate Interdisciplinary Workshop, the GSAS Germanic Forum, the Medieval History Workshop, the Medieval English Colloquium, the Celtic Studies Research and Conference Workshop, the FAS Premodern Race Seminar, and the Early Sciences Working Group, among others. We anticipate eager interest in the conference from the organizers and members of these groups.

The Harvard Medieval Studies community also includes the Harvard Libraries and the Harvard Art Museums. We anticipate that, in conjunction with the conference, Houghton Library will be able to sponsor an exhibit showcasing examples from Harvard's extensive collection of medieval and Renaissance manuscripts—one of the largest and richest such collections in North America—as well as a workshop with a hands-on component and a discussion of teaching with both digital and physical manuscript collections. Likewise, conference attendees will be able to participate in a tour of the Harvard Art Museum's medieval collections. Off campus, conference attendees may be interested in the exciting medieval holdings of the Boston Public Library, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the unique Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, all easily accessible from downtown Cambridge via public transportation.

Within the last five years, Medieval Studies at Harvard has organized or co-sponsored several large international conferences and special events, including the symposium and multi-venue exhibition *Beyond Words: Illuminated Manuscripts in Boston-Area Collections* (2016), *Christian Africa/Medieval Africa, 300-1600 CE* (2017), *Recycling, Revision and Relocation in the Middle Ages* (2018) and *Reading Then, Reading Now* (2019), as well as meetings of the Celtic Studies Association of North America, CARMEN, and the New England Medieval Consortium. The success of these previous conferences demonstrates Harvard's readiness in terms of organizational capacity, facilities and the management of catering, accommodation, transportation and other practical concerns. Graduate students have historically played a significant role in assisting with these conferences, and Harvard graduate students have been the primary organizers of recurring events such as the Harvard Celtic Colloquium and the Harvard-Yale Graduate Conference in Medieval Studies. In other words, graduate students at Harvard possess both the enthusiasm and the experience necessary to plan and host the 2023 *Vagantes* Conference.

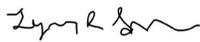
Harvard University is located in Cambridge, Massachusetts, just north of Boston. The Boston metropolitan area has one of the highest concentrations of institutions of higher education in the world. It is easily accessible from virtually any destination worldwide via Logan Airport and via rail and bus connection from the entire northeast corridor. The commute from both Logan airport and South Station to Harvard Square via the "T," the local subway system, is quick and convenient. As soon as participants exit the T station at Harvard Square, they will already be standing in front of our proposed venue, the newly renovated Smith Campus Center with its spacious conference rooms and social areas. After a day's work of conferencing, Cambridge has no shortage of inviting restaurants and bars to cover the social component of such an event. Finally, there are many hotels and lodgings of various types in Cambridge either close to campus or within a short commute. In these times of diminishing budgets and increasing costs, however, we are also committed to setting up a matching program to pair student participants with Harvard graduate students who have extra space for accommodation.

D. Statement on Costs

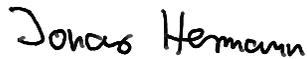
The Standing Committee on Medieval Studies will be able to provide a financial basis of \$3,000. We are confident that we can raise the same amount from the Provostial Fund for the Arts and Humanities, although it is too early to apply for the 2023 funding cycle at this point. The rest of the budget will be covered by numerous smaller contributions from the participating departments, institutes, student organizations, and the Graduate Student Council. We anticipate that these organizations will be able to provide sums of several hundred dollars apiece.

E. Student Representatives

Lydia Shahan, Committee on the Study of Religion
lydiashahan@g.harvard.edu



Jonas Hermann, Germanic Languages and Literatures



Nicholas Thyr, Celtic Languages and Literatures



Sama Mammadova, History



Omar Abdel-Ghaffar, History and Middle Eastern Studies



F. Faculty Advisors

Sean J. Gilsdorf, Standing Committee on Medieval Studies
Nicholas Watson, Department of English