**Fall 2017**

**MEMS New Book Seminar: Shayne Legassie, The Medieval Invention of Travel (University of Chicago Press, 2017).**

Seminar Leaders

Karla Mallette (University of Michigan) and Shayne Legassie (UNC)

**Readings**

1. Legassie, *Medieval Invention of Travel,* Introduction & Chapter 1
2. Sharon Kinoshita, “Traveling Texts: De-Orientalizing Marco Polo’s *Le Devisement du monde*”
3. Houari Touati, *Islam & Travel in the Middle Ages,* tr. Lydia G. Cochrane (University of Chicago Press, 2010),Chapter 2.
4. Selection from Marco Polo, *The Travels,* tr. Ronald Latham (Penguin, 1958).
5. Images of medieval maps.
6. Brief excerpt from Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*, tr. William Weaver (Harcourt Brace & Co., 1974).
7. Doreen Massey, “A Global Sense of Place” from *Space, Place, and Gender* (University of Minnesota Press, 1994).

Optional Reading: Zayde Antrim, *Routes & Realms: The Power of Place in the Early Islamic World* (OUP, 2012), Chapter 1.

**Topics for Discussion**

**Travel**

\*Why do we travel, and how does travel change us?

\*How do evolving attitudes toward travel alter the practice of dwelling, and—vice-versa—in what ways do emergent modes of dwelling shift perceptions of travel?

\*To what extent are particular modes of travel or mobility defined in relation to technology—and to visual technologies and the technologies of literacy, in particular?

**Cartography**

\*How does mapmaking sustain ideological fantasies, particularly those related to group identity, sovereignty, and conquest? Under what conditions might it contest such fantasies?

\*In what ways do cartography and travel writing contribute to a sense of one’s place in the world?

\*How do we misunderstand maps—both medieval and modern—when we uncritically conflate “scientific” cartography with utility and “pre-scientific” cartography with fancy and/or ideology?

\*How does knowledge of the aesthetic and institutional contexts in which medieval maps were used color our perception of cartography?

\*Is there a “medium specificity” to medieval maps that would distinguish them from travel writing, panel or mural painting, stained glass, mosaic, sculpture, tapestry, etc.?

**Language**

\*In what ways does language solidify notions of territory, identity, and historical continuity or rupture? Under what conditions does it allow such notions to be negotiated anew?

\*Is language instantiated in territory? Does it have territorial sovereignty: can its range be plotted territorially? If not, how does language intersect with territory?

\*What do you learn about a given culture’s attitudes toward geography and cross-cultural contact by examining the vocabulary that it uses to talk about mobility?

\*Under what circumstances do new modes of literacy change the ways that societies understand—and undertake—travel?