Reciprocity of Transmission and Reception: The Disticha Catonis

2:00 – 5:00 p.m. Fridays and 9:00 a.m. – noon Saturdays
January 20-21, February 3-4 and 10-11; and March 2-3 and 30-31
Optional research trip to the Bibliotheca Ambrosiana in Milan, March 10-18

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This seminar will explore the reciprocal relationship between transmission and reception of texts, using as a case study Cato's Disticha, one of the most widely read and studied texts of the medieval and early modern period. Transmission means the deliberate communication of a text from one generation to subsequent ones, involving a network of paratextual elements that make it attractive, accessible, and useful to future readers. Reception means the active receiving of a text, conditioned by these paratextual elements and by the newly developing requirements of the time. Written down about 200 AD, Cato’s versified proverbs collection became a “set book” of elementary education throughout Europe from the ninth through the seventeenth centuries, and so was continually copied, frequently printed, and subject to various commentaries, Latin paraphrases, vernacular translations, and new editions—all witness to the extent and character of the transmission and reception of the Disticha.

Participants will be assigned as ongoing projects “bundles” of distichs that engage specified topics, tailored to each student’s primary interests (history, vernacular literature, information science, etc.). As the culmination of the class, the instructors have arranged a one-week research visit at the Bibliotheca Ambrosiana in Milan. Housing will be provided, but students or their institutions would have to cover transportation costs.

Prerequisite: Latin reading knowledge. While students can pursue a research project in one of the European vernaculars, competence in Latin is essential.

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Enrollment is limited. Register online at www.newberry.org/renaissance. To receive credit you must also enroll in either a Newberry course at your campus (available at several Chicago-area schools) or an independent study. Contact the Center for Renaissance Studies consortium faculty representative at your home institution for your university’s policies and to apply for travel reimbursement. Enrollment fees are waived for consortium members.