The UC Berkeley Program in Medieval Studies invites submissions for an interdisciplinary graduate student conference:

“The Material Middle Ages”
February 28 and March 1, 2014
University of California, Berkeley
Keynote speaker: Cynthia J. Brown, Professor of French, UCSB

Medieval Studies has been stood on its head: we’re all materialists now. Medievalists are increasingly attentive to the physical objects that form the basis of our scholarly practice, and the social forces that determined the production, use, and survival of those objects. Literary critics can no longer exclusively draw on critical editions of medieval literature; it’s now expected that any new critical interpretation come buttressed by paleographical and codicological evidence drawn from the archive – and from the growing ranks of online digitized manuscripts. The latest grand historical syntheses are increasingly built around insights from archaeology and material history. The past decades have underlined the importance of corporeality and bodily knowledge to medieval religious and philosophical thought.

This conference looks to open a discussion of the “material Middle Ages” to emerging scholars across the disciplines. We invite proposals for papers that consider specific material objects – books, images, buildings, etc. – but also those that expand their scope to address questions of materialism from socio-political, theological, philosophical, and literary perspectives. We invite traditional and non-traditional paper proposals from all disciplines, including literature, linguistics, philosophy, history, art history, archaeology, classics, musicology, ethnic studies, geography, gender studies, and religion. Scholars working on subjects outside the Latin West, or traversing multiple regions, are encouraged to apply. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Medieval materialism -- How did medieval artists, poets, visionaries, theologians, scientists, and political thinkers address questions of matter and the body?
- Contexts and afterlives -- How were medieval texts made, read, circulated, and preserved? How might we incorporate this knowledge into our critical practice?
• Form and matter -- How do mise-en-page, illustration, rubrication, marginalia, and other features of the physical book reinforce or complicate formalist criticism of medieval poetry and prose?
• Book history beyond the codex -- What methods can best address the multitude of medieval writings that survive outside of books and rolls: in ephemeral pamphlets, in monumental epigraphs, in preserved graffiti, and in previously unforeseen contexts, such as the Bryggen rune sticks?
• Landscapes -- What were the built environments and cultural landscapes of the Middle Ages, and how did they impinge on thought and experience?
• Bodies -- How was the body understood by discrete periods, places, and people in the Middle Ages?
• Economics and development -- Can cliometrics open new questions and bring new insights to our studies of the Middle Ages? What can numismatics, archaeology, and archival work tell us how medieval material conditions of production affected politics and culture?
• Teaching the material Middle Ages -- How should we bring manuscripts and material culture into the primary or undergraduate classroom?
• Digital humanities and Medieval Studies -- How is widespread digitization changing Medieval Studies: what is gained, and what is lost?
• Critics and critiques of materialism -- What are the limits and dangers of paleography, codicology, or archaeology? How might we envision alternative futures for Medieval Studies?

Submit a 250-word abstract for a 20-minute paper to the conference committee (materialmiddleages@gmail.com) by November 15, 2013. Please include a brief bio and specify any audio-visual requirements.

Organized by Jenny Tan, Spencer Strub, Brock Imel, Jason Treviño, and Joel Pattison.

Sponsored by the UC Berkeley Program in Medieval Studies, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, Department of English, Department of French, Department of Comparative Literature, Department of German, Department of History, Department of Italian, and Graduate Medievalists at Berkeley (GMB).