

# *Beasts and Books: A Research Journey through the Middle Ages*

by Noah Smith '23

English Literature and German

Mentor: Dr. Yelizaveta Strakhov, English



*The Dance of Death- The Bishop* (1929)  
by Hans Holbein<sup>1</sup>

## **Prior Learning**

Under Dr. Strakhov's mentorship, I learned about:

- Codicology, the study of manuscripts
- Paleography, the study of historical handwriting

Texts looked at include:

*The Dance of Death* by John Lydgate

Poems of Thomas Hoccleve

*The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer

Left: Woodcut from John Lydgate's *The Dance of Death*

## **Current Project**

From Special Collections *Incunabula*- Books from the early days of the printing press

I've chosen to work with the *Physiologus* by Theobaldus, a text concerning animals.

Background research includes:

- Studying the origins of paper and print in China and the West
- The sociology of reading and book culture
- The history of book distribution

Right: Woodcut from a Natural History Encyclopedia

Spider from 1491 *Incunabulum*<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup>From the Cleveland Museum of Art; Wikimedia Commons

<sup>2</sup>From *Hortus Sanitatis* by Jacob Meydenbach, printed in Mainz in 1491; Wikimedia Commons.

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