

GSAS Workshops in Indo-European and Historical Linguistics
Department of Linguistics, Harvard University

Speaker: [Claire Bower](#) (Yale University)

Time: Friday February @ 5 PM EST

Location: Boylston Hall 335

Title: *Linguistics and the Voynich Manuscript*

Abstract: In this talk I describe recent work on the Voynich Manuscript, a 15th-century codex written by 5 scribes in an unknown writing system (MS408 in Yale's Beinecke Library). The manuscript has attracted considerable attention for its fantastical plant, zodiac, and balneological images, as well as being the subject of heated debate over the language of the text. Is it a Latin cipher? or Nahuatl? or a conlang? or not natural language at all? This talk summarizes recent work and discusses how I've built an undergraduate class around the manuscript, to introduce students to (historical) linguistics and language documentation, including linguistic diversity, language relatedness, evolution of writing systems, paleography, and related topics.