

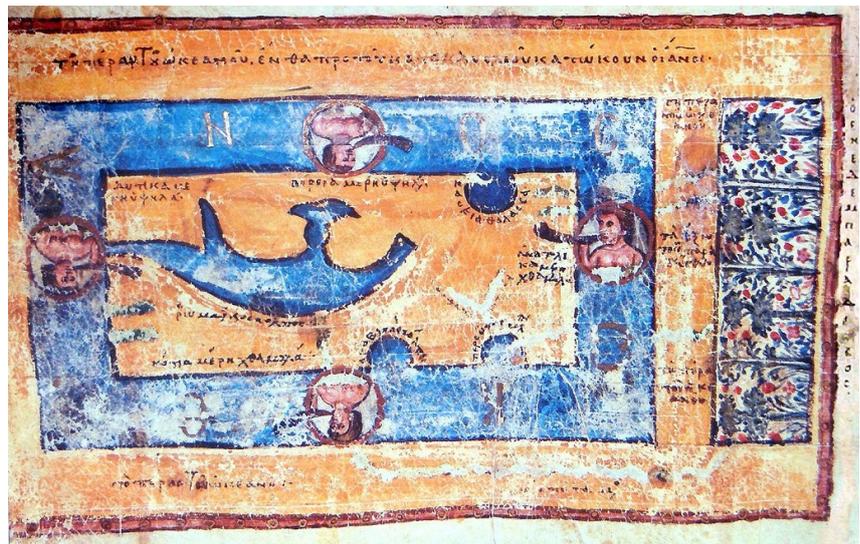
‘Mapping and space from Ptolemy’s *Geography* to the 13th century’

HCA, MA Option, Spring Term

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Where are you? What would you draw if I asked you to make a map of where you are right now - Bloomsbury, London, Britain, the world? What would you include and what would you leave out? We see maps around us everywhere but has it always been like this?

In around AD 150 Ptolemy provided instructions for drawing a world map which we would immediately recognise. Four hundred years later another Roman scholar wrote another text about the form of the world and his map is illustrated at the top of this page. So, what had happened? Had people just got stupider? Many twentieth-century histories of cartography imply just that: the Dark Ages happened and maps went away. Only in the late thirteenth century did the Byzantine monk, poet, mathematician and philosopher, Maximos Planoudes rediscover Ptolemy’s *Geography*. Within decades new copies of Ptolemy’s maps had proliferated across the Mediterranean, becoming vital to the age of European maritime exploration. But in the centuries between Ptolemy and Planoudes people still travelled and imagined far-away places; they planned military campaigns and organised taxation systems. And they made things we call maps, even if they look very strange to us. ‘Mapping the Medieval World’ will use a series of such objects to think about medieval concepts of mapping and space, to ask why Ptolemy may not have been what was needed, why the alternatives worked better and for what purpose, and why and how Planoudes’ discovery contributed to another change in direction.



Unknown artist, map of the earth, Codex Sinaiticus graecus 1186, fol. 66v, 11th century, St. Katherine's monastery, Sinai.

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