Beasts and Books: A Research Journey through the Middle Ages
by Noah Smith ’23
English Literature and German
Mentor: Dr. Yelizaveta Strakhov, English

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

1From the Cleveland Museum of Art; Wikimedia Commons
2From Hortus Sanitatis by Jacob Meydenbach, printed in Mainz in 1491; Wikimedia Commons.
1. From the Cleveland Museum of Art; Wikimedia Commons
2. From *Hortus Sanitatis* by Jacob Meydenbach, printed in Mainz in 1491; Wikimedia Commons.