Purpose
The purpose of this class is to introduce beginner garb makers to an inexpensive, simple garb project that easily fits into the SCA guidelines of making an attempt wear pre-17th century clothing.¹

Introduction
In this class you will learn about the type of female dress found in the Manesse Codex.

So what is the Manesse Codex? Paraphrasing from Wikipedia: "The Codex Manesse, Manesse Codex, or Große Heidelberger Liederhandschrift is an illuminated manuscript copied and illustrated between ca. 1304 and ca 1340. It was produced at the request of the Manesse family of Zürich. It is the single most comprehensive source for the texts of love songs in Middle High German, representing 140 poets, several of whom were famous rulers. The manuscript has 137 illuminated miniatures that are a series of portraits depicting each poet." The dress style found in the Manesse Codex is not unique to that document. However, I did not want to write a general paper about German dresses from 1300-1350. I wanted to do a specific survey about a specific document. In this way, I am writing both a class about dresses and an analysis of a specific document.

How Many Dresses?
The total number of women represented in the Manesse Codex is 126.

It's all About the Dress!
There are two types of women's dresses found in the codex, a dress called a “cote” and an overdress called a “surcoate.” All of the women are wearing a dress. Twenty-three percent of the women are wearing an overdress as well.

The Manesse Codex dress is a garment that has minimal fitting in the body, two simple, unfitted sleeves and two side gores. The construction is easy. It's all straight seams.

The dress is a type of T-tunic. A true t-tunic looks like a T when it is constructed: straight vertical body, straight perpendicular arms. This type of construction will mean that your sleeves begin at the point between your shoulder and your elbow. Not very pretty.

The dress found in the Manesse Codex is a bit more fitted. While the upper arms are still baggy, the lower arms are fitted. Also, you can achieve a better look by cutting off excess fabric at the shoulders and "setting in" your sleeves. All of this is show in the directions on the following pages.

¹ You can see the excerpt from the SCA Handbook at the end of the class notes.
**Step 1: Take Your Measurements**

This pattern is made with three simple pieces: body, sleeve, side gores. For those of you who are more knowledgable, you might wonder, "where are the underarm gussets?"² We are not going to worry about gussets in this class. The arms are going to be cut wide enough to eliminate the need.

You will need several measurements to calculate the size of the pieces. I have listed the measurements below and what they are used for.

1. shoulder to toe = ______________
2. waist to toe = ______________
3. head circumference = ______________
4. middle of neck to shoulder point = ___________
5. shoulder circumference = ______________
6. bust = ______________
7. waist = ______________
8. hips = ______________
9. upper arm circumference* = ______________
10. shoulder to wrist length = ______________
11. wrist circumference = ______________

*This should be the biggest part of your arm, wherever that may be.

Do not be scared of the measurements. They will all make sense later.

² If you know enough to ask that question, you know too much to attend this class.
Make a Test Garment!!

I have tested this formula by making three dresses for myself and a dress and surcoat for my model. This formula works for me. However, I STRONGLY RECOMMEND that you test this formula for yourself to see if it works for you. Use inexpensive fabric.

Step 2: Cutting the Pieces

**Body of the Dress (use measurements #1, #5, #6, #7, #8)**

The first piece that you will cut is the body of the dress. The front and back are cut in one piece. You determine the length of the body by multiplying your shoulder to toe measurement by 2 and adding 4" for a deep hem. For example, if your shoulder to toe measurement is 52", the length of your body piece will be 104" + 4" for a hem = 108".

You determine the width of the body piece by selecting the largest of the following measurements: shoulder circumference, bust, waist, hips. Let's say that your hip measurement is 50" and it is the largest of your body measurements. Cut that in half to 25" and then add a seam allowance of 4". So, the body of the dress is 108" long by 29" wide.

If you fold the pattern in half at the dotted line, it becomes the front and the back of the dress.

**Gores (use measurement #2)**

The second two pieces that you will cut are the side gores. The side gores put extra fabric at the sides of your dress that allow you to walk with your normal stride. A dress without gores may hamper your movement. The length of the side gores are the measurement from your waist to your toe + 2" for hem. If your waist to your toe measurement is 41", the length of your gore is 41" + 2" = 43". The width of your gore will vary according to your taste. Some books reference 10" wide gores as period. That's the width that I use.

Cut two gores on the fold. If you are short on fabric, you can piece them together as I have done with my model's surcoat. Piecing is period.

**Sleeves (use measurements #9, #10, #11)**

The last pieces that you will cut are the sleeves. Your sleeves are trapezoidal in shape. The upper part of your sleeve is your upper arm circumference + 11". The length of the sleeve is your arm length from shoulder to wrist. (You don't need to add any extra. They will always turn out too long.) The lower part of your sleeve is your wrist circumference + 1".
Step 3: Create the Neck Opening

To create the neck opening, cut a circle that is the circumference of your head minus 1". I recommend subtracting an inch because the fabric will stretch and you don't want a neck opening that is so wide that your bra straps show. This is true especially for linen. If you make your garment out of cotton, the stretch will be less.

Fold the garment in half at the shoulder seams and cut out the neck hole.

Once you cut the neck opening, try it on.

If it fits with no problem, face the neck opening. Cut a bias piece of fabric that is about 10" longer than your head opening measurement and about 1 1/2" wide. Pin the bias strip around the neck opening, right sides to right sides and sew in place.

Bias - Cutting a piece of fabric on the bias means that you are cutting it at a 45 degree angle. This gives you maximum stretch to go around a circle. In the photo above, you can see that my bias strip was not on the 45 degree angle, which is why it puckers a bit.

Turn the bias strip to the inside of the garment and sew it down.

This is a finishing touch that makes the garment look more period. A line of machine stitching around the neck to hold down the bias strip is very obviously modern. Since this is a beginner class, I'm not going to tell you that you have to hand finish your dress but it does make the garment look nicer. You can barely see the stitching at all when you do it by hand.

Now that you have created your neck opening and reinforced it, you are ready to cut away the excess fabric at the shoulders. If you don't want to cut away the excess fabric, skip to Step 5.
Step 4: Cut the Shoulders Down to Size

Determine how much fabric to cut away by laying your dress body on the table and finding the center point. Using your shoulder measurement (#4), measure from the middle of the neck hole to your shoulder point. Mark with chalk. Do the same on the other side of the dress body.

Your top sleeve width is your upper arm circumference + 11". Using 1/2 the measurement of your top sleeve width, measure down the side of the dress body from the top edge and mark with chalk. Draw a straight line between the two points. Cut away that triangle of fabric.

Step 5: Sew in the Sleeves

Your dress body now has a V shape at the shoulders. Pin your sleeve into this area and sew in your sleeves. The photo below shows the V shape on one side of the body piece and the set in sleeve on the other side.

Step 6: Sew on the Gores

Sew your gores to the body of the dress, one on each side. Construction tip: When you pin the gore to the side of the body, feed the pieces through the sewing machine with the gore-side on the bottom. This will eliminate the ripples caused from stretching because the edge of the gore is not the "straight of the grain" direction.

Step 7: Sew the Front to the Back

I usually sew from the end of the sleeve to the under arm, then I sew from the bottom of the dress to the underarm. This prevents stretching at the ends of the garment.
Step 8: Hem the Sleeves
Try the dress on and hem turn up the sleeves. Take the dress off and hem the sleeves.

Step 9: Hem the Dress
Try the dress on and have somebody mark the hem for you. Take the dress off and hem the dress.

Making the Overdress
The over-dresses shown in the Manesse Codex have very high armseyes for the most part. To make a surcoat in the Manesse Codex style, I would recommend that you follow the steps above, omitting the sleeves.

In addition, I recommend lining the surcoat to give it body. To line the surcoat, I would make the same surcoat twice, each one out of a different color. To attach the surcoat and lining to each other:

1. Sew the neck seams together, right sides to right sides.
2. Turn the overdress and lining right sides out.
3. Turning the edges of the armseyes under, stab or whipstitch the arm holes to each other.

Making the Same Dress Look Different
There are several ways that you can make the same dress pattern that we've been discussing look different:

- wear different headgear, the most common in the codex is shown here =>
- select different colors
- select different fabric types
- line the tunic
- put button closures on the sleeves
- wear a belt
- wear a purse
- embroider the neck and cuffs
- wear gloves
- decorate your dress with paint

Headwear
There are six images in the Manesse Codex that show women with long, unbound hair and no headwear. However, the average woman generally didn’t walk around with long hair unbound. This was only done by children, unmarried girls or women of ill-repute. If you fit into any of those categories, go ahead and wear your long hair for all to see. Since most of us don’t fit into those categories, I would recommend wearing something on your head. It presents a more finished look for your outfit.

I have written a class on all the women's headwear found in the Manesse Codex. You can find it at my website: http://www.winterthimble.com/articlesclasses/manessewomensheadwear.html

Colors
The most popular colors for dresses in this document are pink (30), red (25), green (27), and turquoise (26). Less frequently used colors are maroon (6), blue (5), gold (3), black (2), brown (1), and gray (1).
The most popular colors for over-dresses are turquoise (11), pink (10), red (4), green (2), maroon (1), and blue (1).

One note about red, pink and maroon: these colors are shades of the same color produced from the same types of dye. The color varies because of dying time, mordent used and the chemical content of the water. A newly dyed garment would be red or maroon. An older garment that was originally red or maroon and has been washed a lot would fade to pink or brown.

When you choose your fabric colors, select a color that isn’t heavily saturated. Select something that would look a bit faded. (Please note that my printer is making these garments look like they’re made from saturated colors but they are not.)

Below are examples of dresses made from the same pattern, worn with different accessories.

![Lady Alessandra di Venizia wearing the dress shown in the construction photos in this handout.](image)

![Herrin Genefe Wolflien wearing a dress with an apron, head scarf and straw hat.](image)

![Lady Amie Sparrow (yours truly) in red with a belt and a very silly period hat.](image)

**Types of Fabric**

Historically accurate materials are wool, linen and silk. Wool is probably the most commonly used material, being both plentiful and (relatively) inexpensive. However, given that we live in the hot, humid mid-Atlantic, I use linen. I recommend that you use linen.

You can use cotton if you wish, but in addition to being incredibly historically inaccurate, you will find that it doesn’t wick as effectively and stays damp for longer than linen does. It is also more stiff than linen.

Sources for linen: [www.fabrics-store.com](http://www.fabrics-store.com), [graylinelinen.com](http://graylinelinen.com), [www.denverfabrics.com](http://www.denverfabrics.com). Note: Do not buy handkerchief weight linen from Fabrics-store.com. You will receive fabric that is light-weight by virtue of a very cheese-cloth weave. It is horrible quality stuff. Don't buy it.
**Lining Your Dress**
Period dresses were lined. It was cold in Germany back in the 14th century. (Heck, it's cold in Germany now.) You will find that lining your dress makes it more durable and the garment moves in a more period manner when you walk. The downside to lining your dress is that it will be hot.

If you do line your dress, use a contrasting color. This is shown in the Manesse Codex.

**Use Buttons**
There are at least five images of women using buttons in the Manesse Codex: 63r, 70v, 312r, 314v, and 410r. They are used as closures at the front of a garment and also closures for tightly-fitted sleeves. Historically accurate buttons were made from cloth stuffed with wool. You can find directions on how to make cloth buttons in a paper about ball buttons by Dunstana Talana the Violet, OL (mka Jennifer Carlson) here: http://www.personal.utulsa.edu/~marc-carlson/jennifer/buttons/Basicfabricbuttons.htm.

The Medieval Tailor's Assistant by Sarah Thursfield also gives directions on how to make cloth buttons.
Wear a Belt
There are four images of women wearing belts in the Manesse Codex, two of them are shown above (70v, 312r). Though these belts look like strings of pearls, they were most likely leather as shown in the image on the right (64r). A resource for belts is: http://www.billyandcharlie.com/belts.html

Links to belt hardware merchants can be found here: http://moas.atlantia.sca.org/wsnlinks/index.php?action=displaycat&catid=344

Purses
Embroidered purses were worn during the Manesse Codex period as shown in images 64r and 162v. Creating embroidered purses is not a project to be undertaken lightly. It will take you some time to complete one. A good reference for this style of embroidery is the article "A Stitch Out of Time - 14th and 15th Century German Counted Thread Embroidery" by Master Richard Wymarc (mka Timothy J. Mitchell): http://www.wymarc.com/aso0t/german/stitch_article.php

Embroidery
The Manesse Codex shows thin lines of embroidery around the neck and cuffs of seven dresses. A thin line of embroidery will help cover your machine stitching. See images 394r and 395r on the next page.
Gloves
Women are shown wearing gloves in three Manesse Codex images: 69r, 394r, and 395r. They appear to be white leather work gloves. I have white leather gloves. I can attest that that will keep you warm at winter events. My leather gloves were purchased from Panther Primitives (http://www.pantherprimitives.com/other.html).

Belt note: Notice that the woman above in 394r must be wearing a belt because her dress it hitched up over her waistline. However, the belt itself is not illustrated.
**Painting**
There are several images that show a printed fabric. I do not know if the images are meant to convey woven fabric, painted fabric, or embroidered fabric. For the purposes of creating your patterned fabric, you might try to use fabric paint.

See image 194r on the right and 197r below.

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**Final Thoughts: What about all that gold trim around the neck and wrists?**
If you look at image 64r on page 9, you'll see an dress and overdress decorated with gold trim on the cuffs and neckline. Frankly, I don't know what the deep gold trim in the illumination is meant to represent. It could be a literal interpretation of local fashion. It could be an artistic convention that means "insert pretty embroidery here." I've seen a couple of dress diaries that recreate the dress with the gold collar and cuffs. Unfortunately, the verisimilitude of these garments seems questionable to me. I haven't seen one yet that looks convincing to my eye. Eva Anderson's is probably the best of these: http://web.comhem.se/~u31138198/redcotte.html

If you like the, I recommend that you go ahead and try to make one. After all, this is all about experimental archaeology.
### Appendix A: The Data

The tables below summarize my analysis of women’s garments in the Manesse Codex, giving a description of the type, the number of times it was illustrated and the page number of the codex upon which the image was found.

#### Table 1: Dresses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Page #</th>
<th># times used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pink</td>
<td>17r, 24r, 32v, 42r, 43v, 46v(2), 70v, 71v, 82v, 113v, 169v, 190v, 192v, 194v, 197v, 201r, 204r, 217r, 229, 237, 299r, 300r, 312r, 312r, 321v, 397v(3), 410r</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>11v, 13r, 17r, 22v, 42r, 52r, 59v, 113v, 169v, 178r, 190v, 192v, 204r(2), 231r, 285r, 312r, 316v, 321v, 323r, 394, 395r (green hem), 397v(2), 412r</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>11v, 17r, 42r, 52r, 63r, 64r, 69r, 76v, 98r, 146r, 151r, 162v, 179v, 183v, 190v, 192v, 194r(print), 204r, 217r, 219v, 249v, 251r, 252r, 271r, 302r, 314v, 415</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turquoise</td>
<td>17r, 52r(2), 54r, 110r, 146r, 164v, 181v, 299r, 300r, 311r, 319r, 410r, 413v, 204r, 257v, 258v, 261r, 281v, 285r, 299r, 300r, 311r, 319r, 410r, 413v</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maroon</td>
<td>11v(2), 120v, 231r, 256v, 344v</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>43v(2), 48v, 197v (print), 371r</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold</td>
<td>46v, 197v (print)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>342v, 371r</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brown</td>
<td>46v</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gray</td>
<td>52r</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Table 2: Overdresses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Color</th>
<th>Page #</th>
<th># times used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turquoise</td>
<td>24r, 32v, 46v, 82v, 120v, 169v, 178r, 231r (long sleeved), 256v, 319r, 321v</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pink</td>
<td>52r, 63r, 64r, 69r, 146r, 194r (printed) 197v (printed), 271r, 302r, 311r</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>146r, 194r (long sleeved printed), 217r, 249v</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>52r, 300r</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maroon</td>
<td>13r (long sleeved)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>197v (printed)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No overdresses in Gold, Brown, Gray or Black.

#### Table 3: Cloaks

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Color</th>
<th>Page #</th>
<th># times used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red lined with fur</td>
<td>63r, 110r, 151r, 179v, 181v, 252r, 257v, 258v, 300r, 415v</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pink lined with fur</td>
<td>32v, 76v, 98r, 162v, 219v</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pink lined with green</td>
<td>183v, 251r (possible hood)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue lined with fur</td>
<td>217r, 344v</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black lined with fur</td>
<td>342v, 371r</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pink lined with red</td>
<td>48v</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red lined with pink</td>
<td>314v (one garment?)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Yellow lined with fur | 281v (religious garment? Don't quite know what this is.) | 1
Yellow | 397 | 1
Total | 25

**SCA Policy**


| II. EVENTS |
| B. Requirements for Participants at Society events |
Anyone may attend Society events provided he or she wears an attempt at pre-17th century clothing, conforms to the provisions in Corpora, and complies with any other requirements (such as site fees or waivers) which may be imposed. At business meetings and informal classes, the requirement to wear pre-17th century dress may be waived. All participants are expected to behave as ladies or gentlemen.

**Bibliography**

   http://www.personal.utulsa.edu/~marc-carlson/jennifer/buttons/Basicfabricbuttons.htm


   http://www.winterthimble.com/articlesclasses/manessewomensheadwear.html

4. Manesse Codex. University of Heidelberg:
   http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/cpg848?sid=045d80c6d12bd79445d5f1555d5e68b4&ui_lang=eng


**Dress Diaries**


**Living History UK Discussion about this type of Dress**
http://www.livinghistory.co.uk/forums/viewtopic.php?f=3&t=23826