

Teaching Classes at Pennsic

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I have been teaching classes in the SCA since 2004, and at Pennsic since 2005. Teaching at Pennsic is my favorite thing in the SCA, it is one the most rewarding things I've done and I am planning to continue to teach for many-many more years. I hope that if I share my experiences, and offer a few tips and suggestions, people who are thinking of teaching at Pennsic, but are too intimidated or overwhelmed will consider sharing their knowledge with others at our largest event!

Every year, Pennsic University offers hundreds of classes on hundreds of subjects, taught by enthusiastic amateur and professional educators, and managed (admirably smoothly) by a core of super-dedicated volunteers.

If you have never taught at Pennsic, go to the Pennsic U website, and read through the teacher section: <http://www.pennsicwar.org/penn46/DEPTS/PENNU/>

Then, decided what you want to teach. All classes taught at Pennsic are registered online, through the Thing: <http://thing.pennsicuniversity.org/>

In order for your class to appear in the printed Pennsic book, it has to be in the system by May 1. May 1 is the usual deadline, but is worth double-checking every year, especially is Pennsic is particularly early. You can still register your class later than the printed book deadline, up to the last Thursday of Pennsic, but it will appear in the online schedule only.

You will be first asked to register as a teacher, and create a teacher profile. It is worth doing, because once you're in the system, the Thing saves your profile, your classes and your descriptions, and saves you from reentering everything every time you try to teach a class.

You will also be asked to enter the dates you will be at Pennsic. Remember, these are not the dates you are available to teach at Pennsic, just the dates you will be on site.

Name and Required Contact Information

Legal name

Full name

SCA title

Lady

SCA title, if any

SCA name

Luceta Di Cosimo

SCA name, up to 30 characters, without title

SCA kingdom

Æthelmearc

SCA kingdom, if any

Phone number

+1 405.555.1212

Pre-pennsic contact number.

Phone number onsite

+1 405.555.1212

Cell or other on site contact number

Please select the days you plan on being on site and available to teach classes. These will be used by default for classes you request, although you can override them on a per-class basis. Actual class days are more limited than the selection below.

☐ 2017-07-2 ☐ 2017-07-2 ☐ 2017-07-3 ☐ 2017-07-3 ☐ 2017-08-0 ☐ 2017-08-0 ☐ 2017-08-0 ☐ 2017-08-0 ☐ 2017-08-0 ☒ 2017-08-0 ☒ 2017-08-0 ☒ 2017-08-0 ☒ 2017-08-0

After you complete your profile (and you can click on instructor profile and update it, should you wish to), you can register your classes, starting with a basic description:

Thing Schedules ▾ Instructor ▾ Account ▾ Sign out About

Class Information

* Class title

Limited to 50 characters

* Description (book)

Book description, limited to 150 characters

Description (web)

Web description is not limited, but please keep it concise. If this is blank, the book description will be used.

* Duration (hours)

Additional instructors

Enter the SCA names of other instructors, separated by commas, of any additional instructors. Leave it blank if none.

* Sessions

1

Number of times this class will be taught.

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What is it: The description is very important! It will determine whether or not people want to take your class. I recommend against puns or obscure references. Be exceedingly clear in your description. If you are teaching a skill, say so. If it is overview of documents on use of this skill, indicate that. If you are going over wages of guild affiliated leatherworkers, and people in your class are expecting a class on leatherworking techniques, no one will be happy.

Complexity: Clearly indicate whether it's a beginner, intermediate, or advanced class, if applicable. If you want to cover a topic from very basic to advanced, consider a "track" a group of classes taught sequentially with increasing difficulty/complexity, if you want to teach to different skill levels. Clearly indicate how advanced the class is - if a specific skill is needed, indicate that too!

Then, you have to decided whether this fits into a particular culture, which is useful for the students looking for classes on a specific culture, such Japanese or Viking, and indicate whether you are teaching it in a private camp or a merchant booth, rather than in an A&S tent. There are advantages and disadvantages to both. If you have a gorgeous shady camp, you don't have to trek to the university in 100F weather and 100% humidity, which is great. However, if your camp is hard to find, or is very remote to the central location, the students may not show up. If you must teach in a camp, consider leaving detailed instructions on how to get there, or even contact info in the long web description. There are, of course, classes which are only taught in camps or merchants booths, which require special equipment, extensive set up, or open flames.

Pennsic U facilities include: A&S tents, centrally located behind the First Aid point and AE Royal.

AE Royal tents 1 and 2 (usually for scribal track classes)

Bog U (block E24) – was new for 2016, I would assume they keep it this year as well

PA (performing arts) PAVILION

Amphitheater

Dance pavilion

Middle Eastern pavilion

Indicate your preference where you want to be teaching in the special needs description, at the bottom of the form. (Couple of my classes were scheduled in the amphitheater once.)

Some things to consider: The university policy is very strict regarding minors, and unaccompanied minors are NOT permitted in classes taught outside of Pennsic U tents, and the classes targeting people under 18 must be scheduled through Youth Point activities. Minors: free range age is 12, 12 and over are allowed in Pennsic U facilities, assuming materials are age appropriate. Under 12, with a

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parent/guardian/adult at all times. No minors under age 18 are allowed in private camps classes, with an adult only!

Culture

If this class focuses on a culture, please select it here. Leave this choice blank if there is no specific focus.

* Topic

Select an appropriate topic for this class. Some topics have optional subtopics, which may be selected if one applies.

Private Camp or Merchant Booth

Private camp or merchant?

Age Ranges or Restrictions

There should be "adults only" restrictions on a class involving alcohol or anything else that might pose a danger for young students. The comprehension level or appropriateness of the class should also be considered.

Classes designed exclusively for students under the age of 18 must be scheduled with Youth Point (pennsic.youth@gmail.com)

Pennsic University classes targeted at students under 18 years of age MAY NOT be scheduled in Private Camps or Merchant Booths.

adult only

Then you discuss handout and materials fees. You can NOT sell anything at your classes – the Coopers' merchandising policies are very strict regarding that. However, it is perfectly reasonable to ask to be reimbursed for the materials you use to teach a class, especially if it's a make and take class, or for the copying and printing costs. I am blessed with a reliable and accessible color laser printer, so I do not charge anything for my handouts. Previously, I would show up with reams of printed paper. What I do now, I have a few handouts available, and post the rest on the web. This saves a few trees, and a lot of time, especially if you got long and elaborate handouts with detailed images.

Then, you have to decide when you want to teach – if you like to sleep until 11AM, or day trip, do not sign up to teach the 9AM classes.

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Handouts and Materials

Handout fee

In dollars

Handout limit

Material fee

In dollars

Material limit

Fee itemization

Scheduling Requests

Requested days and times are best effort. Leave them all blank, and we will use the days you will be attending Pennsic from your profile.

Requested days

☐ 2017-08-01 ☐ 2017-08-02 ☐ 2017-08-03 ☐ 2017-08-04 ☐ 2017-08-05 ☐ 2017-08-06 ☐ 2017-08-07 ☐ 2017-08-08 ☐ 2017-08-09 ☐ 2017-08-10 ☐ 2017-08-11

Select the days you prefer to teach this class, or leave blank and your profile's days will be used.

Requested times

☐ 9am to Noon ☐ Noon to 3pm ☐ 3pm to 6pm ☐ After 6pm

You can always elaborate on why you need a specific time slot in the “scheduling additional” section. If you have scheduling conflict and absolutely can’t teach at a certain time, mention it. They try really hard to accommodate their teachers, and, personally, I never had any problems. Please be aware that they will not be able to accommodate requests which go against the campground, Pennsic and Pennsic U policies!

Just remember: facilities are very limited. Do not count on water, fire or electricity. Basic tenuous electricity may be available, but don’t count on that either. Let the University know what you need, but plan on bringing your own.

Scheduling additional

Please describe any additional scheduling requests, such as "Avoid conflicting with battles", etc.

Special Needs

Special needs

☐ Electricity ☐ Whiteboard and Markers ☐ LOUD class ☐ Running water ☐ Messy class area ☐ In Persona ☐ Instrumental or Vocal Performance

Special needs description

Sanitary disposal, excess or hazardous waste removal, etc

☐ Heat source

Create class

Cancel

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Then you click *Create class* button, and you are done! You will almost immediately get an automatic e-mail confirming your class submission. In a few weeks, when the schedule is out, you will get another e-mail with the time and place of your class.

A beautiful thing about the Thing: it keeps your classes and descriptions from prior years, starting from 2013, so if you want to teach you class next year, just select it, adjust the description, if needed, select when you want to teach it, and you're done!

Remember, you are limited to teaching 4 classes! Exceptions may be made if it is a series of classes, especially on performance track, or if your classes are not in the Pennsic U facilities.

Now, that you are all registered you have couple of months to get all your materials together!

When you are at Pennsic:

When you are on site, stop by the University Point, starting Tuesday of the Peace week and sign in in the teacher book. It is very important: if it's time for your class, and you are not in the book, they may consider you a no show, and give you less consideration for registering your classes for other Pennsics. Your students will also check the book, to see if you're on site, and may skip your class if they think you will not show up. Plus, when you register, you get a nifty pewter token as a thank you gift!

If you can't teach a class and need to cancel it, let the University know as soon as possible. Contact them via e-mail prior to Pennsic, or stop by the University Point when you're onsite.

Some miscellaneous logistical things:

A&S tents are plastic, and get overheated easily. Can put up the tent walls if needed, instructions on how to do so are provided, and are usually taped to the table or the tent pole.

Bring water! You will need it.

Chairs: tent chairs are labeled with a tag with tent number. Depending on the number of people in your class, you may need extra chairs, or other people may take chairs from your tent. Please make sure the chairs go back to their appropriate tent at the end of the class.

Handouts: you can limits number of handouts, you can't limit number of how many people are audition the class, even though there are not enough handouts/materials. It is reasonable to charge for handouts/materials at cost. There is no pre-registration for classes, and the classes are offered on the first come-first taught basis.

Different people recommend different ways to do handouts. Some people do basic outlines, some write mini articles. I do something in between. In this digital age, I am much less concerned about not having enough handouts, as I make them available online. Coopers' internet spot has copying services, if you need additional handout copies.

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If you are concerned about plagiarism (even though we are all supposed to be noble lords and ladies), you can consider the following:

Publish first, then teach, although it is not usually feasible.


Distribute hard copies only, or PDFs, as they are somewhat more difficult to cut and paste.

Put a copyright in your handout.

Use Creative Commons license, and insert it into your documents. You can find sample creative commons wording here:

<https://creativecommons.org/>

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In all my years teaching classes, I have not had any problems with plagiarism. However, you have to do what's comfortable for you, especially if you are a researcher or an inventor, or working on a book.

Make and Take - make sure you have AT LEAST as many kits as you list in the class description. If you say that class is limited to 10 students, have 10 kits. It is better to have a few more, just in case. People will love you when you say: "actually, we can take a couple of more people, I have extras", and will be very upset, when you have 9 kits, and they are the 10th person waiting to take your class.

Class timing: Time yourself - in reality you have about 45-50 minutes, if your class will take more, request 2 hours slot, leave a bit early, and make it clear in the class description.

Class size limits are not usually enforceable: Unless it is a safety issue, you can't enforce how many people show up for your class. It is enormously flattering when tons of people show up for your class. It is ridiculously ego-inflating when the tent walls are taken down and there are dozens of people standing outside in sun and rain (sometimes at the same time) listening to your talk. It sucks when you prepared for months, printed out dozens of handouts, and only a few people show up. However, remember that these gentles made time for YOU on THEIR vacation. You owe them a good class experience. Regardless of the class size and who showed up, make sure that there is enough instructor to go around, and you can pay attention to everybody. If you can't answer all the questions during the allotted class time, make yourself available after the class.

Questions: As above, make sure you are available to answer all your students' questions. I usually leave a few minutes at the end of the class. Be mindful of the tent schedule, and, if there is a class immediately after, vacate the tent, and hold you Question/Answer session outside, without disrupting the next class. This is also one of the reasons I don't like teaching back to back classes.

Common Concerns:

Don't I have to be a Laurel/Fleur/Sycamore to teach X? no, you don't. In all my years of teaching classes at Pennsic I was not once asked about my A&S credentials.

But I am not an expert... Great! You don't have to be. You can just know the basics of a skill and teach the basics. It is needed, wanted, and greatly appreciated. The important thing is to set up and manage the expectations in the beginning of the class. If you sign up to teach "introduction to X", no one will expect you to teach "advanced applications of X in the south of France in the later half of 1385".

What if somebody comes to my class and they know way more than me? You would be very lucky if they do, and let you know it, because you can ask them questions and ask for references!

What if a disruptive student hijacks the class? It is a very common concern, but it only happened to me once. It was not done maliciously, was absolutely surreal, and ended up with my students singing medieval choral music. Some people even cried. Makes for a great story! However, most people are amazingly polite, and will be model students. If someone starts talking over you, or interrupting you,

or asking ridiculous questions, acknowledge them, say that it's a great point, and you would be happy to discuss it if they want to stay after class. Chances are, they wouldn't.

What if I get a question I can't answer? Just say that you don't know the answer. If the answer doesn't exist, i.e. not enough info is available, let them know. Please don't try to make it up – it's obvious when people try to do so.

What if they don't like it? You can't expect everyone like everything you do. That said, if you clearly set up expectations in the beginning of the class, know what you know, do your best to deliver it well, and answer the questions your students have, you will have a very solid class, and it will be well liked.

Some additional resources on teaching classes in the SCA in general:

All the links below are valid as of 04/24/2017.

How to Teach Classes in the SCA, by Mistress AnneLiese Wolkenhaar.

<http://fibers.destinyslobster.com/ASComp/ASTeach.htm>

On Teaching Classes in the SCA

By Lady Meliora Leuedai de Ardescote

<http://www.florilegium.org/?http%3A//www.florilegium.org/files/EDUCATION/Teach-in-SCA-art.html> .

Teaching in the SCA by Mistress Alicia Langland.

<http://www.florilegium.org/?http%3A//www.florilegium.org/files/EDUCATION/idxeducation.html>,