

# **HY200, Topics in History: The History and Future of the Book**

**Half Block, January 2010**

**9:30 - Noon, Palmer 217**

**Steve Lawson, Humanities Librarian  
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Office Hours: Jessy and Steve are normally in their offices until 5:00 on weekdays. You are welcome to drop in, but to ensure that we are available, it's best to make an appointment or call/email ahead.

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION AND LEARNING OUTCOMES**

We will examine the development of technologies of the written word, from clay tablets and sheepskin scrolls to the manuscript codex, early printed book, modern printing, and digital text. We will question the way reading, writing, and preserving texts intersect with identity, memory, and history, making extensive use of primary materials in the library's Special Collections and incorporating a hands-on experience at The Press at Colorado College

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to :

- Use specialized vocabulary for describing and discussing books as objects;
- Set type and operate a printing press as a novice printer to gain a greater understanding of the creation of hand-set books;
- Draw conclusions and make predictions about the future of books and reading which are grounded in an understanding of both the history of the book and the contemporary situation;
- Use specific historical examples from the history of the book to propose and support a proposition about books, printing, reading, or the like.

## **COURSE TEXTS**

David Pearson. *Books as History: The Importance of Books Beyond Their Texts*. Oak Knoll, 2008.

Ray Bradbury. *Fahrenheit 451*. Any edition is acceptable, from the first edition (Ballantine, 1953, now worth about \$5,000) to the one available at the bookstore (Ballantine, 1995).

## **PROWL**

We are using PROWL for links to course readings and to maintain a more up-to-date version of the class schedule and syllabus. The course schedule below often does not list specific readings--you will find them on PROWL instead. You will also use PROWL to turn in assignments. If you have any trouble with the site, let us know as soon as possible. If for whatever reason PROWL will not accept your assignment, you may email it to both Steve and Jessy.

You can find our PROWL page listed as a History course or use this URL:

<https://prowl.coloradocollege.edu/course/view.php?id=1420>

All students enrolled in the course should already have access to the PROWL page. If you are asked for an "enrollment key" or password, it is the course number: hy200.

## **POLICIES**

*Attendance:* Even for Colorado College, this is a short course with very few class meetings. We expect you to attend class every day (including scheduled afternoon sessions at the Press) and to show up on time and prepared to participate actively in our discussion. Your overall grade will be lowered if you fail to do so.

*Extensions:* We will not accept late work. We may grant an extension only if you speak with us in advance (this does not include the morning that the assignment is due). Failure to turn in *all* assigned work *will* prevent you from passing this course—no exceptions.

*Cell phones:* We will all, of course, turn off our cell phones before class begins.

*Laptops:* You may bring your laptop to class, but woe unto you if we discover you using it for non-class activities during our time together.

*Plagiarism/Cheating:* The Honor Code applies to all of your work in this course. Failing to acknowledge and document ideas and language that are not your own is known as plagiarism, and this practice violates the Honor Code. Should you be unfamiliar with proper citation methods or if you do not understand the college's stance on academic dishonesty please speak with us immediately AND read the Constitution of the Honor System which is available online at <http://www.coloradocollege.edu/resources/pathfinder/HonorCouncilConstitution.asp> >.

*ADA Statement:* If you have a disability and require accommodations for this course, please speak with us as soon as possible so that your learning needs will be appropriately met. If you have not already done so, you will need to register with

Disability Services (Learning Commons at Tutt Library, Room 152; phone: 227-8285), the office responsible for coordinating accommodations for students with disabilities.

## **EVALUATION & GRADING**

Class participation (including printing of class book): 25%

"Fifteen Things About Me and Books" : 5%

Computerless response paper: 5%

Physical description of book: 10%

Speculation paper: 20%

Virtual exhibition paper: 30%

Virtual exhibition presentation: 5%

## **CLASS SCHEDULE**

### **Monday, January 4: What is a book?**

Discussion: We will look at examples of texts in material form from clay tablets to the Kindle.

Assignments:

- Read Ch. 1 - 3 of *Books as History* (through p. 91)
- Read John Scalzi's Fifteen Things About Me and Books, <http://www.scalzi.com/whatever/003906.html>.
- Write your own version of this internet meme by 6:00 p.m. and post to the class forum on PROWL. Read each others' responses and come to class with at least two questions or comments on the class's statements.

### **Tuesday, January 5: The book as object; the anatomy of a book, condition, rarity, different kinds of value.**

Discussion: "Me and Books" assignment, last night's reading. Mini-appraisals of the value of a handful of books. You are welcome to bring in a book of your choosing to be unofficially appraised. Choose a book for tonight's physical description assignment.

Assignments:

- Write a short physical description of the book you chose in class and submit on PROWL before class on Wednesday.
- Readings/links about digital literature and artists' books on PROWL.

Netcessary Literature: read/view six or more works from the examples here:  
<http://www.coloradocollege.edu/library/instruction/onlinemags.html>

Brian Dettmer: Book Autopsies  
<http://centripetalnotion.com/2007/09/13/13:26:26/#more-550>

Altered Books <http://www.logolalia.com/alteredbooks/>

23 Sandy Gallery (Scroll down to section on book artists)  
<http://www.23sandy.com/Artists.html>

### **Wednesday, January 6: Form and meaning / digital literature and books as art**

Discussion: view examples of digital literature together and talk about this new genre.  
 Also: book arts, artists' books, altered books.

Assignments:

- Readings and videos on PROWL:  
 Clement, "Medieval and Renaissance Book Production"  
 Darnton, "What is the History of Books?" *Daedalus*, Vol. 111, No. 3(Summer, 1982), pp. 65-83  
 Last minute addition: Chappell, *A Short History of the Printed Word*, chapter 3  
 Medieval Manuscript Reproduction (all videos on the page; about 6 minutes total) <http://www.medievalists.net/2009/08/16/medieval-manuscript-reproduction/>  
 Pictorial Webster's: Inspiration to Completion (video, about 8 min.)  
<http://vimeo.com/5228616>  
 Medieval Help Desk (video, about 3 min.)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQHXSjgQvQ>
- Write your response to tonight's readings and/or videos as a presentable (legible, perhaps even beautiful?) piece of text created WITHOUT USE OF A COMPUTER. Handwrite and/or type on a typewriter a single paragraph of text. Your final draft should be perfect -- no typographical errors, no unreadable handwriting. Bring in all the drafts the next day. You are welcome to come and use the typewriter in Special Collections between 1 and 5 in the afternoon.
- If you haven't already, this might be a good time to start *Fahrenheit 451*.

### **Thursday, January 7: Manuscript books and letterpress from Gutenberg to Colin Frazer**

Discussion: Handmade responses, manuscript and letterpress. Introduction of final project, due last day of class.

Assignments:

- Read the rest of *Books as History* (chapters 4-7 and "Variety Between Copies: A Case Study.")
- Chartier, "Readers and Readings in the Electronic Age." Composed for text-e online symposium, 2001.
- Write a brief statement of what you will be doing for your final project and post to the PROWL forum by 8PM.
- Start or continue reading *Fahrenheit 451*.

### **Friday, January 8: Books and owners**

Discussion:

- Themes in the textbook.
- Proposed final project topics

Assignments (over the weekend):

- Finish *Fahrenheit 451*
- For the class book, which you will be creating, choose a short statement (one or two sentences -- remember, you'll be hand-setting the type for it) somehow related to books and reading. This can be your own original thought (with yourself as the author) or a quote from someone else. It should look something like this: "Remember first to possess his books; for without them he's but a sot, as I am. -- Caliban, *Tempest III.ii*." Bring this with you to class on Monday.
- Readings about preservation of texts and loss/destruction on PROWL.

Nicholson Baker, "A New Page" *New Yorker*, August 3, 2009

[http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/08/03/090803fa\\_fact\\_baker](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2009/08/03/090803fa_fact_baker)

Steven Johnson, "How the E-Book Will Change the Way We Read and Write," *Wall Street Journal*, April 20, 2009

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB123980920727621353.html>

Randall Stross "Will Books Be Napsterized?" *New York Times*, October 3, 2009

[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/04/business/04digi.html?\\_r=3&em](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/04/business/04digi.html?_r=3&em)

Motoko Rich, "Curling Up with Hybrid Books, Videos Included," *New York Times*, September 30, 2009

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/01/books/01book.html?scp=2&sq=curling&st=cse>

- Write a short (three page) paper speculating about the future of books and reading. Turn in on PROWL before class on Monday.

### **Monday, January 11: Future of books and reading, preservation and loss.**

Discussion (in class 9:30-noon): *Fahrenheit 451*, preservation and loss, your quotations/thoughts for printing.

Afternoon (1:00 - 3:30 PM): Meet at the Press at Colorado College, Taylor Hall (just east of Bemis). Meet Colin Frazer, orientation to the press, set type for your page.

Assignment:

- Readings about Google, Kindle, rights, etc. on PROWL

Forget E-Books: The Future of the Book Is Far More Interesting

<http://www.fastcompany.com/blog/adam-penemberg/penemberg-post/say-so-long-book-we-know-it>

Darnton, "The Library in the New Age." *New York Review of Books*, June 12, 2008

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/21514>

"My Kindle Ate My Homework: Amazon Pays for Deleting Student's eBook," *Huffington Post*, October 1, 2009 [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/10/01/my-kindle-ate-my-homework\\_o\\_n\\_306638.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/10/01/my-kindle-ate-my-homework_o_n_306638.html)

Doctorow, "How to Destroy the Book." *theVarsity.ca* 2009.

<http://thevarsity.ca/articles/23855> (part 1 only)

"The Book Mechanic" (on Terry Bellanger), *Chronicle of Higher Education*, December 6, 2009 <http://o-chronicle.com.tiger.coloradocollege.edu/article/The-Book-Mechanic/49310/>

"DIY Book Scanners," *Wired*, December 11, 2009

<http://www.wired.com/gadgetlab/2009/12/diy-book-scanner/>

- Work on final project.

## **Tuesday, January 12: Googlization, Kindles, and their discontents**

Discussion (9:30 to noon in class): Googlization, Kindles, and their discontents.

Afternoon at the Press (1:00 to 3:30): print and assemble the class book.

Assignment:

- Readings about bibliomania on PROWL.

"The Blumberg Collection" in Nicholas Basbanes's *A Gentle Madness*

David Abel's "Welcome to the Library, Say Goodbye to the Books," *Boston Globe*, September 4, 2009

[http://www.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2009/09/04/a\\_library\\_wiouth\\_the\\_books/](http://www.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2009/09/04/a_library_wiouth_the_books/)

Daniel Traister. "What Good Is an Old Book?" *Rare Books and Manuscripts Librarianship*, 7:1 (1992), 26-42.

- Work on final project.

### **Wednesday, January 13: Bibliomania**

Discussion: Mock book auction, with personae, desiderata, and budgets assigned in class.

Assignment:

- Finish virtual exhibition assignment and submit on PROWL before Thursday's class
- Prepare a 3-minute (no longer!) presentation on your exhibition for tomorrow.

### **Thursday, January 14: Last day**

Brief presentations of virtual exhibitions, celebration of the class book.

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

1. (Turn in on PROWL before class Wednesday, January 6.) Physical description of a book. Two pages. Use bookish vocabulary when possible. For example: tell us the book is half-calf, if it is. Try to find the right terms for each part of the book. Useful resources: John Carter's *The ABC of Book Collecting* (link on PROWL), Glaister's *Encyclopedia of the Book*, handout. You will be assigned a book in class.
2. (Turn in on PROWL before class on Monday, January 11.) Speculation about the future of books and reading. Three to four pages. Your paper needs to do two things in roughly equal measure: (1) respond to the vision of the future of books and reading as presented in *Fahrenheit 451* and (2) present your own vision of the future of books and reading. Throughout, you will incorporate the themes of the class. Tell us how people will read, if they do. How will they get their reading materials? Will reading materials be commodities? How will they be distributed, shared, preserved? What will it mean to be an author? Feel free to go out on a limb and present a future that is overtly Utopian or dystopic if you wish, but base that future on what you have learned about the past and observed about the present.
3. (Turn in on PROWL before the start of the last day of class, Thursday, January 14.) Virtual exhibition. Seven to ten pages. Topics could include, but are not limited to, typography, binding, papermaking, the Library of Alexandria, a particular printing house (for example, Aldus Manutius, the Elzeviers, HarperCollins), an in-depth look at a particular book in a particular edition (for example, the Nuremberg Chronicle, the Gutenberg Bible), the various manifestations of a particular text over time (examples: Milton's *Paradise Lost*, the Bible, Baum's *The Wizard of Oz*, Nabokov's *Lolita*). Provide reproductions/photographs/illustrations of five items. Write an overview of your virtual (that is, pretend) exhibition, as if you were composing the introduction to an exhibition catalog -- about two pages long. Write careful and detailed "labels" for each of your five items, at least a paragraph each. As we have done in class, consider your subject both

historically and in terms of what it says to us about where the future of the book may be headed.

## **FURTHER READING AND VIEWING (things we may mention in class)**

**Nicholson Baker. *Double Fold: Libraries and the Assault on Paper*. Random House, 2001.** About libraries withdrawing/destroying paper copies of newspapers.

**Nicholas Basbanes. *A Gentle Madness: Bibliophiles, Bibliomanes, and the Eternal Passion for Books*. Holt, 1995.** Contains our reading on Stephen Blumberg.

**Pierre Bayard. *How to Talk About Books You Haven't Read*. Bloomsbury, 2007.** This is not a book of summaries of famous books (as the title makes it sound), but rather, a book about how and why we read, and the meaning of reading.

**Jorge Louis Borges. *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings*. New Directions, 1964.** Contains a story entitled "The Library of Babel."

**Karen Brookfield. *Book*. Dorling Kindersley, 2000.** A terrific source of full-color images of things related to the history of books and book creation.

**John Carter. *ABC for Book Collectors*. Oak Knoll, 2004.** A glossary of useful terms for describing the physical aspects of books.

**Gary Hustwit (producer and director). *Helvetica: A Documentary Film*. Plexifilm, 2007.** A whole film about a typeface. You may also want to take the Arial vs. Helvetica quiz: <http://www.ironicsans.com/helvarialquiz/>

**Ron Padgett. *Creative Reading: What It Is, How to Do It, and Why*. National Council of Teachers, 1997.** Suggests exercises for reading creatively, not so much for understanding the text in front of you but for creating something new with it.

**Ronald Searle. *Slightly Foxed but Still Desirable: Ronald Searle's Wicked World of Book Collecting*. Souvenir Press, 1989.** Funny drawings showing human interpretations of elements in dealers' book descriptions.

**Maryanne Wolf. *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain*. Harper Perennial, 2007.** Gives a brief history of the invention of writing systems (and therefore reading), and looks at what goes on in our brains when we learn to read.